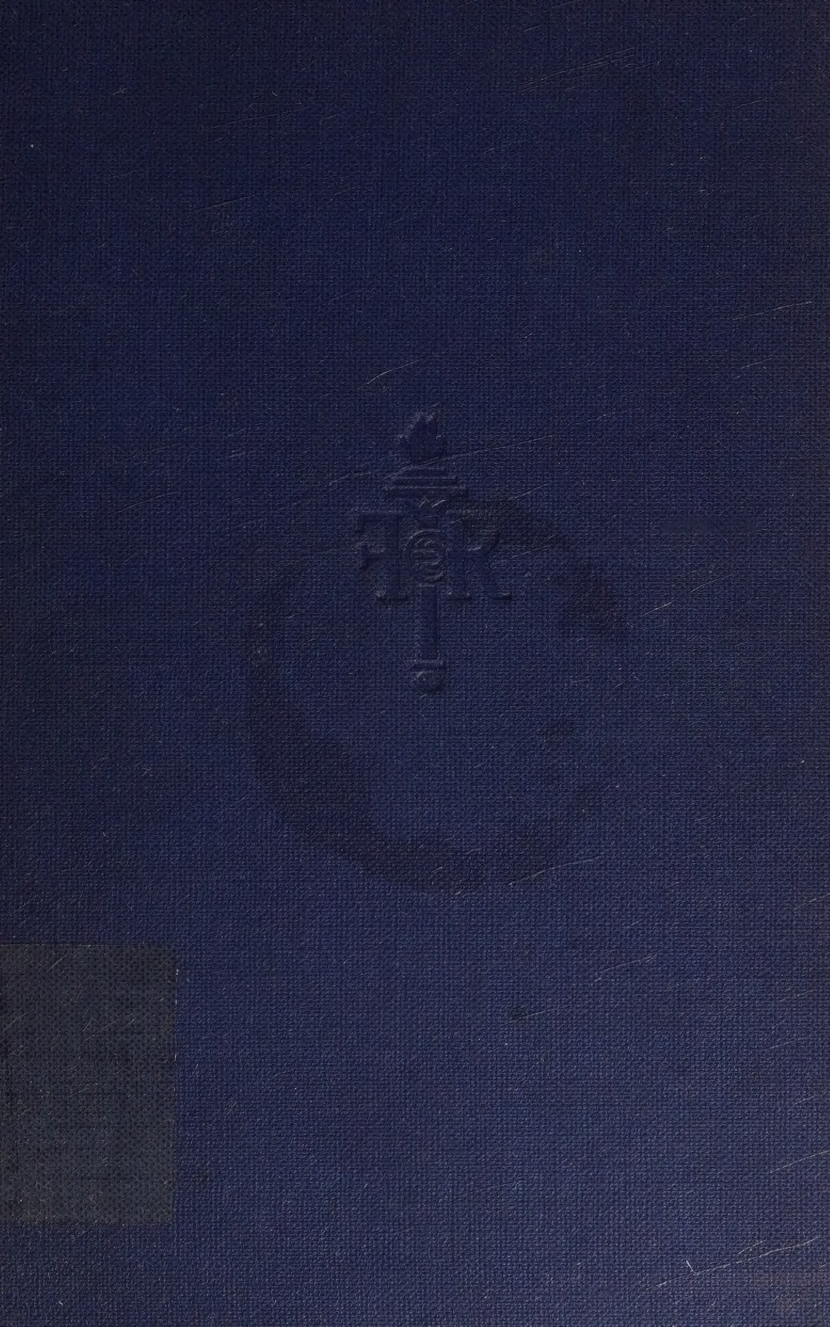

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"Things Most Surely Believed"

A Study in Christian Essentials for Growing Workers

By

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Field-Representative, Presbyterian Board of Christian Education

Author of "Scripture Memory Work, Graded," "Devotional Leadership," etc.

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FOREWORD TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

MANY young people feel religiously perplexed. They want to live right and desire to know the truth that should guide their conduct. In a more serious manner than Pilate they are asking, "What is truth?" Some of them fear to think their questions through; lest they might come to deny teachings that were imparted to them. Others have never been taught the great principles of Christian life. These form the great majority.

This feeling of uncertainty is not confined to youth; it reaches our maturer workers. Their parents, possibly, did not instruct them in religion. The teachings in the Sunday school were in the hands of lay-workers, good of character but versed neither in Bible knowledge nor in human nature. In spite of this great handicap our maturer workers are called upon to instruct a younger generation; while our Christian youth, too, is facing the challenge of those still younger, whose leaders they soon must be.

Intelligent Christians are seeking reasons for their faith. Peculiar fads and cults play havoc with a few of them. It sometimes happens that

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insidious teachings befog their minds and lead them far afield, purely for want of knowledge regarding the true teachings of their own church. Had they but known, they would certainly have remained with us as builders of God's Kingdom. But they were not well informed; they could give no sufficient reason for their faith. We lost them. Perhaps we deserved to lose them. It is the sacred duty of the Christian Church to instruct her members in the way of truth, and it is the sacred right of all church members to receive needful instruction.

We may as well confess, however, to a fatal scarcity of literature on the subject, couched in language sufficiently popular and put into compass brief enough to arouse and maintain the interest of those who are not theologically trained. There are available a few pamphlets and booklets of divisive trend. But the great essentials of the Christian faith, on which the whole Church agrees and which would answer the questions of inquiring hearts, these vital teachings have not been sufficiently broadcasted to reach our growing workers.

One reason for this failure lies on the surface. Christian teachers as well as Christian students are ranked somewhere among our denominations. He would be a peculiar Christian, indeed, and scarcely qualified to teach the principles of Christianity, who could not be designated as a member

of some church. Yet, for the member of one denomination to instruct members of other denominations in the essentials of Christian doctrine is a most delicate task. Nevertheless, it is becoming ever clearer that not merely the need for such instruction exists, but that the need is growingly felt.

This manual is an attempt along this line. We believe that we are presenting nothing controversial from an evangelical point of view. These lessons may be taught without fear of offence in single churches and in interdenominational classes. We have not written what we have not understood; hence our confidence that these writings will be understood. We have not written what we have not lived; hence our assurance that these writings, too, will live and will be lived.

The scarcity of popular material has proved a handicap in the selecting of books for further research. Some of the books recommended at the end of chapters are somewhat difficult to secure. We suggest that four or five be selected from the entire group, either to be recommended to the public library, or purchased by the group that pursues this course.

In teaching these lessons there is likely to be difference of opinion now and then. The leader will do wisely if he or she refrains from imposing his opinions on the group, and allows free expression. It is quite possible that subjects on

which good Christian people disagree are not as vital and essential as we had thought. Altogether, the sense of unity will be advanced by means of these lessons. The members of the great Evangelical Church, that is, the body of all believers whose Gospel centers on Christ as presented in John 3:16, these are much nearer to each other than usually they suspect.

Every growing Christian needs to form for himself a system of truth for a background in all his work and teaching. This system of truth is contained in the Word of God; but it must be searched with diligence and prayer. In brief compass these twelve lessons will help earnest lay-students to secure a unified presentation of our Christian teachings; which will help them to think and understand for themselves first; then to live their convictions; then to guide others in true Christian ways.

Suggestions for the enrichment of these chapters are cordially invited. We keenly feel the imperfections of our endeavor.

G. V.

Oak Park, Ill.

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I

ORGANIZING OUR KNOWLEDGE

TO live is to believe. The two words are from the same stem and they must coexist, at least in the case of reasonable beings. Our belief may be negative; we may deny. Or it may be positive; we may accept certain ideas as truths. We may believe that beyond and behind this visible world there are spiritual forces and personalities; or we may deny all that. In either case, we hold to a certain belief. And according to that belief we act. If we believe that the greatest experience in life is to love God, and the next greatest to love our neighbor as ourselves, then we will act quite differently from the man who believes there is no God, and that his neighbor has no soul.

But suppose we do believe in God and in a spiritual world as basic to the things we see; then we may still hold any of a myriad various views about the facts and the relationships of that unseen world. Actually, through the ages many peoples have thought of spiritual matters in vastly different ways. To-day even in so-called Christian countries the opinions on matters of doctrine are

legion. They cannot be limited even to the numbers of churches and sects that have arisen; because every individual is entitled to his own opinion and is inclined to exercise that right.

Freedom of Belief

There was a time when individual opinion on religious matters was officially suppressed. A group of men had formulated a body of doctrine which they declared to be the only truth. Deviation from that teaching was proclaimed as falsehood, destructive to the soul and therefore to be prohibited. The simplest and surest way of carrying that plan into effect with any measure of success was for the majority to burn, to drown, to hang, or to decapitate the erring minority. This was accordingly done. The whole of Spain, with most of Italy and France, is now of one faith because of just such methods. Those of different opinion were either banished or killed. In principle this suppressive method was applied also in most Protestant countries. "Like prince, like people," was the universal motto. The ruler who turned Anglican expected his people to turn with him. The prince who adhered to the Lutheran faith demanded that confession of his subjects. It was the same where the Reformed creed held sway; with one exception. William the Silent, born in a Lutheran home, reared at a Roman Court, and converted to the Reformed faith, pro-

claimed the solitary teaching, "Let every man be free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience." So far was he ahead of his times that not another ruler followed him. Even the Pilgrim colonists, that settled in our country, had not caught his spirit. But when at last our Fathers wrote the Constitution of our Commonwealth, that principle became forever established in our land. Each individual is entitled to his own religious belief and to its free expression.

Belief and Knowledge

Belief is not invariably knowledge. We may believe what is not true. There is an element of danger in belief until it has grown into knowledge. To believe that a bridge is safe and to attempt passing over it may mean disaster if that bridge is untrustworthy. To believe that, even if there were a God, He would not be concerned with our daily affairs, will make us plan our lives on a less Christian basis than if we believe that a loving Father cares for us with a heart of overflowing love. We are bound to believe something, and it makes a vast difference in our conduct whether we believe in accordance with facts.

Belief may be based on knowledge; or it may grow into knowledge. The soul that has experience with God has faith, which is no longer opinion. Its basis is knowledge. But the soul that finds a truth and tries it out, will also learn to

identify faith and knowledge; for that truth is alive in his living. The first purpose of these lessons is to center our thoughts on those vital principles of life that have already stood the test among men, and whereby great lives have been steadily molded.

With this goes a second purpose, equally vital, to view these truths which we believe and know, as one united system.

The Unity of Christian Truth

Most of us have in the process of reading the Bible, in our preparations for Christian teaching, in the perusal of secular books and magazines, and in attendance at religious gatherings grown acquainted with numerous facts of religious significance. Almost unconsciously we have absorbed certain vital truths that have meant much to us and that will forever mean much to us. Relatively few of us have been led, however, to gather up these truths of life and to organize them into a body of truth, a harmonious system that will serve for a philosophy of life, authoritative enough and also comprehensive enough to govern our daily actions. This course is planned to help you do this exceedingly wholesome thing.

So far as the number of instructive items is concerned which from time to time have come under our observation, we are probably well enough supplied with practical suggestions for ordinary living;

but the life of a true follower of Jesus should be more than ordinary. Every follower of Christ should in some way propagate the teachings of Christ. In view of this summons to every Christian we may also have gained ability by means of reading and by practice in teaching, to convey the knowledge of certain facts to others. But a knowledge of facts, and ability to convey them, do not suffice to make either a secular or a sacred teacher. One may read most diligently and make it a point to remember the minutest details, so that he shall be known as a walking encyclopedia; but even this will not make him a teacher. Because facts as such do not interest anybody; they must first *concern somebody*. Facts in themselves possess no right to a person's interest; they are empty and vain without relationships. It is the relationship of facts that creates interest; because in these relationships is the revelation of truth. And these interrelations serve to form a system of truth.

Organic Unity Holds Interest

If we should analyze a flower, taking it apart and examining all its particles,—petals, stamens and pistils,—being able to name these separate parts, but not the reason why there should be these parts, nor the service each part is rendering to each other part, and to the whole flower, and in what way each member of this little body helps the flower to live and eventually to perpetuate it-

self,—if we had names and particles and nothing more, we could not with these facts interest either the dullest or the brightest student. And the trouble would not lie with the student; it would lie with us.

> *"The primrose by the river's brim*
> *A yellow primrose was to him,*
> *And it was nothing more."*

Should we be able, on the other hand, to point out the particular functions of the pistil, its relation to the life of the flower and the manner in which its service is performed; the protecting agencies of the petals and the causes of their colorings; the importance of the stamens with anthers and filaments for the furnishing of pollen; if then the roots might be considered and the processes whereby earth and water are made to minister to the life of the plant; by what force the saps defy the laws of gravitation and move upward; in what marvelous manner the dews of heaven labor together with sun and air to produce moisture,—in short, how the four primal elements of the universe, earth, air, fire and water, are laboring together on behalf of that little flower; then what student, be he bright or dull, could sit by listlessly! Instead of the blasé Primrose Song, there would be heard a rendering of the music of the world's philosophy, as it is hidden in the bosom of a little plant.

"Flower in the crannied wall
I pluck you out of the crannies;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand.
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

The Unity in Divine Truth Holds Interest

This great principle of interest holds true in the study of divine truth. Biblical facts atomistically presented contain small interest. "What's Hecubah to me, or I to Hecubah." Perchance the majority of mature people to whom the Bible seems uninteresting have at some period of their lives been exposed to continuous bombardments with isolated facts. They grew weary of the bombardment and determined long ago to avoid future assailants. Why should it interest anyone, for instance, that our first parents transgressed; if that is a fact by itself without relationship to us! It is not necessary for us to turn the pages of a book in order to discover the presence of sin. We can see sin everywhere about us; we can even find it in our own lives. But when we take note of the blasting effects of sin in the world, and then remember that first great disobedience in the Garden, by which the primeval purity of man was spoiled as ripening grain is spoiled by mildew on a beautiful June morning, then the fact of Adam's fall may challenge our attention. If, further, we listen with our first parents to the voice of a seek-

ing God, who calls man back from his foolish ways and promises salvation through a Redeemer; then, surely, we are interested. In some such way that one fatal fact so many millenniums back becomes part of a great link of facts that goes on and on, —downward in one direction where the human race sinks ever deeper into sin; and also upward in another direction where God so loves the world that He gives His Son.

Or take for another illustration the eating of a lamb, which occurred at midnight in the Hebrew homes as they were about to leave Egypt. What would we ordinarily care about the things those people ate? But further investigation shows that this did not remain an isolated incident. Year after year the faithful Hebrew ate his lamb in commemoration of that midnight of the Exodus. At last there was a Passover Feast in Jerusalem at which "The Lamb" was sacrificed, even the Christ, our Saviour. In the light of that sacrifice the Pascal lamb of ancient days gains significance. To this day we celebrate The Lord's Supper as a memorial of His death, a sacrament inaugurated on an evening when the Lord and His disciples sat together preparatory for the Jewish Passover.

Interrelationships Endow Unity with Interest

These illustrations are profoundly typical. The Bible is *the* Book of Life because it so perfectly portrays all life. The history of Israel is essen-

tially the history of every nation. The biographies of Sacred Writ are true to human experience in all ages. The same laws that made themselves felt in days of long ago are still operative. We call this world a universe because in all its ramifications there may be observed a harmony of laws and a unity of government. All parts of the universe are related to each other and are directly related to God. The laws of nature show the righteousness of God, and they are wonderful. But in the unseen world God reveals Himself even more wonderfully, because of His forgiveness and mercy. The righteousness of God as related to His mercy, and both of these converging in our divine Redeemer, this comprehensive subject forms the most unitary and the most interesting lesson in all teaching. To present such truths in the light in which God means to place them, this is the chief commission of every Christian teacher. It affords us our greatest hope for the securing of unfagged interest.

Isolated Facts Occasion Isolated Groups

Failure to present truths in their interrelationships has militated not merely against the interest which God's Word would otherwise awaken; but it has also served to disturb the feeling of unity which is so necessary among disciples of the same Lord. The many sects, into which the Christian Church has been divided, owe their origin in large

measure to pronounced emphases on single statements in the Bible, without relating these statements to the complete Bible. This is a dangerous and unwarranted procedure. Exactly as the petal of a flower, when it has been removed from that flower and is no longer thought of in connection with that flower, is no longer a petal, but is refuse or dirt, so may it be with an isolated statement from God's Word. It may lose its meaning when it is taken out of its setting, or when considered in that setting alone. But when a sentence does not convey the message that was originally intended by it, then it conveys a false impression. The most precious truths of the Bible may thus be turned into lies.

The story is told of a man, but recently converted, who was asked to split some wood for the kitchen fire. "Can't do it," he rejoined, "for I'm a Christian." Pressed to produce further reason, he quoted from the Bible and quoted correctly, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The cells and fibres of the tree, which God had joined together, he must "put asunder" if he split up wood for the cook-stove. Yet, in spite of the correct quotation and the truth it contained, his argument was as false as the devil himself. There are religious sects that have little more ground to stand on for differing from their brethren than had that recent convert. A religious genius of our day has pictured a meeting between

blind Bartimaeus and the "man who had been born blind," both healed by Jesus, but in such different ways. Because Jesus had not used mud in giving sight to Bartimaeus, the man born blind is supposed to have refused his company. Whereupon Bartimaeus promptly started a sect of Anti-Mudites; while the man born blind became the head of the Mudite sect. It is a far-fetched caricature perhaps—but it has point. In the forming of many isolated groups the wonderful harmony and unity of divine teaching is woefully overlooked. Minor issues are pushed into the foreground at the expense of the essentials.

Denominations and Their Emphases

But what is true of numerous small sects is, in a measure, true also of the great denominations. Their separation from each other is partly due to different temperaments among adherents. It is helpful for worshipers of the same type to have their devotions together. But this difference of type is by no means the only reason for their separateness. It is historically known that certain devout and learned students of the Bible have thoroughly mastered certain great principles of the Christian religion, not by means of isolated texts, or even from single passages, but rather by a study of many parts of the Scriptures, all of which parts testified to the supreme sovereignty of God. From these leading portions of the Bible

they brought together a body of doctrine generally known as Calvinistic. But other students of the Bible, equally devout and learned, did examine the teachings of the Book with equal diligence, seeking and finding those leading portions that emphasized the free moral agency of man. The results of their searchings were gathered into a body of doctrine generally known as Arminian. Both doctrines are based on the Word of God; yet, apparently, they are not in full agreement, and whole denominations have been formed in accordance with the one doctrine or the other. It never seemed to occur to the founders of these denominations that both doctrines might be true, and that inasmuch as both have adequate testimony from the Bible, both ought to be true; nor did they conceive the very simple idea of combining the two doctrines to form a more complete body of doctrine than either alone provided.

Agreement on Essentials

It is an encouraging fact that on the essentials of the Christian faith all evangelical Churches are agreed. Certain ceremonies and rituals are conducted among them in different ways; they follow different plans to reach, receive, and train members; but these differences are of minor import. In the great principles of the faith that make for repentance, loyalty, and kingdom extension, all Christian churches are one, including in a way

even the Greek and Roman hierarchies. These agreements do not concern merely *religious* essentials; but *Christian* essentials, and they find for the most part brief expression in what is known as "The Apostles' Creed." In more modern language and in the words of Jesus we have these great agreements:

1. The Church accepts Christ's statement, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me," and "I and the Father are one." This means that Christian worshipers bow before God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Evangelical Church is not unitarian.

2. The Church accepts Christ's promise of "another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth." Hence her faith in the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Godhead. The Church is trinitarian.

3. The Church believes the Golden Text of the Bible, (John 3:16) involving the sinfulness of mankind, the absolute need of a Saviour, the infinite love of God for the world, the sacrifice of the Son of God, and salvation freely offered in the Gospel.

4. The Church hears the admonition of Jesus, "Search the Scriptures," and believes that the victory of His Kingdom is not by the sword, but by the Word. She finds herself enjoined to teach the Bible with all its applications for to-day.

5. The Church believes in her own position as a divine institution. She remembers that Jesus

gathered a group of disciples about Himself and trained them. She notes how Jesus spoke of Himself as the Bridegroom, with the Church for His Bride; how He called His followers His Brethren, and prayed for them as He did not pray for the world.

6. The Church has heard the great Command, "Go ye into all the world." Hence the mission spirit of the Church, which involves working together in love, training ambassadors that shall be commissioned at home and abroad, and spreading the knowledge of God's love everywhere.

7. The Church hears Jesus say, "Love one another," and esteems love the supreme virtue.

8. The Church takes Jesus at His word when He says, "He that believeth on me shall never die," and again, "I go to prepare a place for you." Hence her unshakable faith in immortality.

Our Reasonable Faith

Although through the centuries the Church has accepted these outstanding articles of her faith, it would not be fair to require of any rational being that he accept these tenets on the authority of the Church, or even on the authority of the Bible. A famous priest of the Roman Church, in speaking to a great company of men, not long ago, said, "Gentlemen, let me do your thinking for you." The Protestant Reformation four hundred years ago came as a protest against that spirit. Prot-

estants insist on thinking for themselves. No Church may with impunity shove a Creed, not understood, in front of its members saying, "Take this and teach it." We require a reason for the faith that is within us.

But the Church does not fear the issue. We know that we have followed no "cunningly devised fables." There may be doubts, but underneath, we know, there is a great Rock. There may be darkness, but above, we know, there is the divine Light. We invite those, who are willing, to take up the great essential teachings with us and to think them through. We need take nothing for granted; we need fear no facts; for truth is of God. There is enjoyment in all hard thinking; but keenest is the joy that comes from research of the things of God. And in all search for truth we shall have a better guide than had Dante when Beatrice went with him; for we have the promise of the Spirit who shall guide us into all truth.

No Arguing in a Circle

In view of this purpose as loyal Protestants we would not be justified in basing our proofs on the Bible before we have gained personal conviction, either from reasoning or experience, or both, of Scriptural authority. To accept the Bible as our rule of faith and practice, simply because our parents or our leaders so instructed us, would

place us in the same category with the children of those churches in which priesthood dictates faith. To argue the Bible from the fact of God and then to argue God from the fact of the Bible would be equally puerile. We must start out from where we are, without preconceived ideas, but ever willing to receive the testimonies of nature, of lives that have shown their worth, and of the unseen forces that may seek entrance to our hearts.

The Purpose Fully Stated

The full purpose of this course of study, then, is the mastering of a system of Christian truth for guidance in personal thought and conduct, for the instruction of others, and for the deepening of our sense of identity with the whole Church of God on earth and in heaven.

Suggestions for Discussion

Let ten students each mention any one fact from the Bible. Put these on the blackboard. Determine together whether any relation between these indiscriminate facts can be established.

Let several students state Bible facts that bear obvious relation to each other. Now formulate the principles that are vital to all of them. Do the same with related historic facts.

Let students quote Bible incidents that will illustrate a single Bible teaching. Call for historic facts that show the same principle.

Jesus mentioned Abraham with greater approval than He mentioned Moses. Discuss possible reasons.

Consider the vital elements that are lacking in the so-called "Apostles' Creed." With this Biblical

creed, reach a working basis for members of various denominations.

Compare the importance of intellect, feeling, and will in religious theory and religious life.

Elicit from class members life philosophies they have formed.

Take a few minutes to prepare the students for the next lesson, the contents of which are likely to be foreign to their thinking.

For Further Research

Introduction to a reliable, popular History of Philosophy.

The Philosophy of Education, Ch. I, H. H. Horne.

The Problem of Human Life, Part II, Rudolph Eucken.

Reading day by day: Ps. 19; Job 38:1-9; Jn. 20:30-31; II Tim. 2:1-15; II Tim. 3:1-7; Eph. 4:11-16; Prov. 8:10-17.

II

VIEWS REGARDING GOD AND THE WORLD

THE many diverse ideas about the origin, the nature, and the purpose of the universe with all that it contains have in the main found expression through three great schools of thought, known as Materialistic, Pantheistic, and Theistic. So completely are the adherents of these three schools at variance one with the other in their views of religion, or man's relation to God, that the same person could not sincerely accept all the teachings of any one of these schools and also accept all the teachings of another of these schools. To do so would compromise both his intelligence and his standards of living. The three schools are inherently and forever antagonistic in those large outlooks on the world and on life.

Agreement Likely on Physical Matters

In unessentials the devotees of these three views of life may cordially agree. Whenever a noted astronomer predicts a sun-eclipse, or the approaching appearance of a comet, those who learn of his predictions will confidently look forward to

their fulfillment, no matter to what school they belong. In case the health officer orders the people of his municipality to boil their drinking water because of dangerous germs, every reasonable citizen implicitly obeys. When an agricultural professor sends out advices regarding the applications of fertilizers of different kinds for different soils, or suggests means of exterminating certain pests, his instructions will be carried out without regard to world-views. Upon facts of science all are readily agreed.

Agreement Possible on Moral Matters

The members of the three antagonistic schools may find unison also on moral matters. An out-and-out Materialist may hate alcohol as heartily as does the Theist, and may be an equally strong defender of human rights with the Pantheist. The three have no quarrel whatever with the principle that life on earth should be useful, and that it should be enjoyed as happily as circumstances permit. They are perfectly agreed, also, that every human being ought to attain to the highest of his capacities. But when it comes to a discussion of reasons and purposes, *why* alcohol must be fought, *why* life should be useful and enjoyable, and *why* the highest ideals should be attained, then the cat comes out of the bag. Reasons and purposes differ radically among respective adherents of the three world-views.

Differing Purposes

As soon as purpose is mentioned, the well-schooled Theist thinks at once of God. In the background of all his thinking lies that comprehensive principle of life, to love God above all and his neighbor as himself. He thinks of God as the benign origin of all things and the great Goal toward which all creation moves. Old Plato thought so, many centuries ago, and the most modern Christian is still imbued with that idea. He wants to identify his own purposes with the purpose of God. Morality is to his thinking the handmaid of religion. Man should attain to the highest because God, the All-Perfect, is beckoning him on. Life should be useful, because we are the stewards of God.

But the Materialist starts yawning while the Theist is thus unburdening his mind. He acknowledges no God, and therefore no relationship with God. Business opportunities are beckoning him, which it were folly to neglect. Every individual ought to make himself useful, because the way of usefulness is the common way to success. Man should attain the highest that is in him, that he may be greatest. The purpose of life on the part of the Materialist is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, beginning with self.

The Pantheist, on the other hand, is poetic in

his world-view. There is no personal God to appeal to him, but rather the immense unity of this variegated universe.

It would be so incongruous, don't you know, if a life that forms part of God should prove to be anything *but* useful and enjoyable and attaining to its highest capacity. The purpose of the sincere Pantheist is to move in line with the onward movement of the universe.

Such utterly divergent impressions do these three groups of thinkers receive from the same objects and phenomena, that if they talked them over between each other they would find no point of contact except in the reactions of the senses. Their aims are not the same; their hopes are strange to each other; there is no common ground of faith. Yet, every one of us belongs to one of these three schools, and we daily act and think according to the tenets of one such school. Even if, as we may well suppose, our membership is in the Theistic school, we come into constant contact with members of the other side. It is well, therefore, that we gain a clearer understanding of each of these world-views.

The Teachings of Materialism

The word "materialism" is derived from the word "matter." The Materialist asserts that matter forms the sum and substance of the uni-

verse. But by matter he means more than we usually mean by it; he includes all the invisible forces that control matter; such as the law of gravitation, the magnetic currents, the ether waves, capillary attraction, inertia and motion, in fact all the laws and forces that are operative in the universe of matter. Not content with this comprehensive view of matter, the materialist assigns also the processes of human thought to matter; for he denies the presence of any spiritual agencies. Just as the liver in a man's body excretes bile, so, the Materialist claims, the brain and its gray matter excrete thought. In similar way are the great laws of nature sufficient to the Materialist for the government of the universe. Hence the Materialist's sweeping conclusions:

1. Matter is eternal, not created. It has neither beginning nor end.

2. Whatever purposes appear to be working out in the world are simply the outworkings of nature's laws inherent in matter.

3. There is no need of any personal or spiritual source of the universe, or of its direction by any agencies outside itself.

4. There is no need of a Supreme Ruler, or God; in fact, there is no God.

5. The existence of a human soul is, like the idea of the existence of God, a figment of the imagination.

Other Cousins in the Materialist's Family

Because of their crass denial of God, the name "atheist" has often been applied to Materialists. The word is derived from the Greek word "theos," which means God, and the prefix "a" which has a negative force,—"no God." For all practical purposes the Atheist and the Materialist are of the same mind,—presuming they have a mind;—for both deny the existence of God and of the human soul. Ernst Haeckel, a German philosopher of a generation ago, was the last noted Materialist. The school as a body of learned men, can no longer claim existence; but the consequences of its teachings are rampant in modern life, with its worship of material things and its lack of appreciation of things spiritual.

A first cousin of the Materialistic clan is the Agnostic. The name is derived from the same Greek stem from which we have our word "know," namely, "gneo," to which also the negative prefix "a" is attached,—"not-knower." The Agnostic does not go quite so far as the Atheist in his denial of the existence of God; he professes complete ignorance in the whole affair. He does not know. But with this negative statement he is not content. He denies that God *can* be known either by himself or by anyone else. He thinks about as highly of the laws of nature as does the Atheist and sees little reason for the governing presence of God. Still, he admits, there might be

such a being. But if there is, he has to be of such a nature that man can never know him. The chief exponent of this branch of the Materialistic school was Herbert Spencer, an English educator of the generation also just passed. But he has many informal followers.

Weaknesses of the Materialist

1. For the satisfaction of the human reason the theory of the eternity of matter has no advantages over the theory of the priority of spirit.

2. The idea of matter as the sole source of the invisible forces and all their laws, taxes our credulity more heavily than does the idea of a personal source behind all these.

3. The idea of purpose without a mind somewhere to do the purposing, is contrary to daily experience.

4. It is presumptuous for the Materialist to assert that God does not exist, and for the Agnostic that if He does exist He cannot make Himself known; for no proof for these assertions has been produced; while testimony to the presence of God has been given from many sides.

5. The Materialist furnishes no proof, either, for his denial of the immortality of the human soul; while, as we shall see later, there are many evidences in favor of such immortality.

6. The natural consequences of materialism,

both logically and actually, condemn its teaching, because they are not elevating but degrading.

a. The tangible things, such as gold, silver, property, and what these can secure, are most worth while. Materialism, therefore, leads to greed.

b. The pleasures of the body deserve first consideration; for they afford chief expression to human nature. Materialism, therefore, encourages lust.

c. Without a hereafter and a final judgment the life of some is filled out with ill-gotten riches, excessive luxuries, and ease; while the sum-total of existence on earth for others is toil, distress, maltreatment and poverty. Materialism leads to inhuman injustice.

d. Human life is a fight from cradle to grave against oncoming age, and it is a losing fight; for death is sure victor. Materialism leads to the deepest kind of pessimism.

The Teachings of Pantheism

There is in the school of Pantheism much more that charms than there is in the Materialistic atmosphere. Pantheism enjoys warmth of life and a throbbing pulse. Unfortunately, in this school the pendulum swings too far the other way. Instead of denying God, the Pantheist posits God everywhere. To his mind God and the universe are identical. The divine Being is not simply im-

manent *in* all things, and, as Paul expressed it, "In Him we live and move and have our being;" but God *is* all things, and all things are God. Hence the word "Pan," which means "all," together with "theos," composing the word "Pantheos," or "All-God."

The most famous exponent of this world-view was Benedict Spinoza, a Portuguese Jew, but living in or about Amsterdam and supporting himself by grinding spectacles. He wrote nature with a capital "N" and used the word very much as we use the word God, except that to him both God and Nature seemed impersonal. All those material things of which the Materialist has been speaking, with all the laws and forces of the universe, he regarded not from the materialistic but from the spiritual standpoint. As he looked at the glasses he was grinding, he thought of the relationship between the convex and the concave sides of the one glass as illustrative of the visible and the invisible universe. You might call it Nature, or you might call it God.

The Charm of Pantheism

At first thought the doctrines of Spinoza possess unmeasured charm, particularly for young people. The writer well remembers the time when he was strongly attracted by its teachings. To think, when looking at a tree, that God is there, and that to touch the tree does really mean to touch God,

has a sobering and worshipful effect for a while. It seems to afford anew the wonderful experience that came to Moses in the desert when he saw the burning bush. But it will be remembered that Moses was cautioned not to approach the bush. The place was too sacred for shod feet. After the first flush of reverence is over, which Pantheism has produced, we come to less worshipful experiences. For if everything is God, then we must sense His presence not simply in the beauty of the flowers and the majesty of the mountains, but also in the ugly things we face, the offal we cast away, the gruesome things that repel us. If everything is God, then what we chew and swallow is God, too. And it becomes difficult to worship such a God. In Pantheism, He, Whom we have learned to revere as the Infinite and All-holy, grows all too common. And the personal nature of God, His friendship which, especially in the Person of Jesus Christ, we have cherished, is lost to us.

A School Fruitful of Cults

It is scarcely surprising that Pantheism has gained many votaries among people who are readily pleased with a form of religion, which does not require much from them. Beginning with its founder, a Jew who had never found Christ, yet searched for light and groped for truth without accepting the lowly Nazarene, Pantheism has never found a personal God. Annie Besant and

her school of New Thought have taken Spinoza's teachings and have made them their own. Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy took as much of it as she could absorb with her limited education, and has left her followers whatever legacy she was able to receive from Spinoza in the idea of an impersonal God. More recently, Bergson, a noted French philosopher, has modernized Spinoza's teachings in his theory of "creative evolution," in which God in His universe is conceived of as similar to the babe's unconscious soul within the little growing body, but gradually coming to consciousness in that body. So, he maintains, God is progressively coming to consciousness in the world, specially through human beings.

Truth and Error in Pantheism

The one great truth in Pantheism, which has furnished it with all the vitality it may boast, is the doctrine of the immanence of God. In the humdrum of life this wonderful fact is easily forgotten. A restless, homesick, wandering race cannot be too frequently reminded of God's presence everywhere. Let us thank Spinoza and the modern cults that have used and abused his teachings, for this one great reminder.

But as a doctrine to live by, we are forced to reject Pantheism, because of its fatal denials of:

1. Distinction between mind and matter, which both are equally God, if Pantheism is true.

2. Creation of matter. Side by side with the Materialist, the Pantheist maintains that matter, —which is to him the same as mind—existed from all eternity.

3. The personal nature of God. As the sum and substance of all things, God is more of a power than a Person. He is nature; which may at times be friendly, but which cannot be a friend.

4. The individuality of man. For man also loses his personality in the great mass of the universe.

5. Personal responsibility. With individuality taken from him, there is no place to center obligation.

6. Sin. Being part of God, it is not possible, of course, for man to sin. The worst he can do is to lag behind in the onward movement of the universe toward perfection.

7. Consciousness after death. Something even less tangible than the Hindu's Nirvana awaits the human being on his demise.

Essentially, the teachings of Pantheism lead to the same absurdities and false positions which we should reach with Materialism. Without obligations, or recognition of sin; without personal communion with God,—or with others, for that matter,—where is the meaning of life? It may seem flattering to consider ourselves, as does the so-called Christian Scientist, "part of God"; but he who so flatters himself is doomed to miss God's

personal friendship. Thus, ultimately, Pantheism becomes a far greater delusion than is Materialism.

Theistic Belief

Theism is belief in a personal God. Generally speaking, the western world is Theistic. But this faith in one Supreme Being does not keep people from having various opinions regarding the nature, attributes and ways of God, and our immediate relation to Him. There may be Deists, Unitarians and Trinitarians.

The Deist's Idea of God

The name "Deist" is taken direct from the Latin "Deus," as "theos" is taken from the Greek. In philosophy the Deists are classified by themselves, even though they believe in a personal God; for their ideas are so different from that of Evangelical believers. They think of God as having created and ordained all things, establishing order in the universe and causing the laws to operate. But when all this had been accomplished, God withdrew and He is still withdrawn from His handiwork, leaving the world processes to the just operations of His laws. It is as if a clockmaker had produced a gigantic clock, arranging every detail accurately, then winding the works and setting the clock agoing to run forever, or until finally the machinery should run down, or wear out.

If this were a true conception of God and His world, it is obvious that prayer would be out of place and that fatalism must be the ultimate and all-embracing law of the universe. For all practical purposes the world of the Deist is not much better off than that of the Pantheist or of the Materialist, with whom natural laws are the sum-total of deity.

The consequences of this cold conception of God have been clearly seen in the devotees of this creed. Deists have not themselves greatly warmed up to worship, or to the extension of the kingdom of God. With a God in mind who had withdrawn Himself from the world, they did not diligently seek the presence of God in daily friendship. As a result, Deism counts but few adherents to-day. But its snare is still catching many unawares. For the idea that the laws of nature are forever so established that the prayers of God's children are futile, when a change of natural operations is concerned, this cold idea is apparently gaining force even among Christian people.

Unitarian Tenets

Unitarians have a far more intimate conception of God than do Deists; but they are distinct from the great body of Trinitarians of which Evangelical Churches are composed. As the name suggests, their chief distinction is the idea of the unity or oneness of God. There is, they say, not

only but one God, but also but one person in the Godhead, and not a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit they think as but another name for the Father, and of Jesus, as the son of God, just as we are the children of God, only more perfectly. They do not, therefore, worship Christ; neither do they lean upon Him for salvation. The life and death of Christ are to them the highest example of divine childhood, which we must attempt to follow. Christ is our teacher, and only in so far, our Saviour. He does not rescue us, but shows us by His own example how we may save ourselves. Salvation is not by grace but by a gracious character.

Altogether, then, we have these three articles in the Unitarian's creed:

1. There is but one Person in the Godhead, God, the Father of all mankind.

2. All men are brothers, of the same sonship of God with Christ, but not yet so far advanced toward perfection.

3. Salvation is not through forgiveness and divine mercy; but through human effort and the accompanying growth of character.

The Shortcomings of Unitarianism

The Unitarians' appreciation of Jesus as a man, not one of us could surpass. They have every praise of Him that our lips might utter; but they hold back from Him the one name that is above

every name, and which He claimed as peculiarly His own,—the name of the Son of God, only-begotten. Regarding the articles of their faith we note:

1. Unitarians confuse the idea of person and being. None of us hold that God is three Beings, or three Gods; but rather one Supreme Being in three persons. The meaning of this we shall consider later on.

2. Jesus not only proclaimed Himself as the Son of God, but also as "the way" to God. Unitarians think of him as a goal which by their own strength they must reach. Jesus offers himself as the power of God whose strength is at our disposal to reach the heart of God.

3. The idea of the "brotherhood of men" sounds fine enough; but it is not Jesus' own teaching. He declared that to enter the kingdom of God, we must be "born from above" (John 3:3). He called the Jews who rejected Him and His sayings, not children of God, but "children of your father, the devil." (John 8:44.)

4. It was the idea of Unitarians that Jesus as the only-begotten Son of God would not be "the way" to the Father as he claimed, but that he would be *in* their way to the Father. With Jesus removed they expected to have freer access to God. But exactly the contrary has resulted. They are missing their great High Priest and gradually they have gone the way of the Deists. Their worship

has grown colder. Many have turned to New Thought and to Christian Science. It is a historic fact that the Unitarian Church is not missionary in spirit. It does not grow, because it lacks the requisite vigor for world victory.

There remains, then, the Trinitarian doctrine, which we shall discuss in a subsequent chapter.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Secure expression from the students by which they may rank themselves in one of the three main schools.
2. Ascertain from the students which view would naturally appeal to them most if they had not been influenced by Christian teaching.
3. Compare Materialism and Pantheism to discern clearly the differences, the similarities and the identities.
4. Discuss modern Materialism among professing Christians.
5. Collect reasons why modern cults are usually indebted to Pantheism.
6. Discuss the appearance of Deism to-day in daily habits of people.
7. Combine all Unitarians in the world, and note their possibilities. Then produce efficient reasons to show why they cannot dominate.
8. Let one section of the class write down modern evils that are legitimately traceable to materialism, and another section those that are clearly traced to Pantheism.

For Further Research

The Christian's God, Ch. II, William Burton.

The Diviner Immanence, Ch. I, IV, Francis J. McConnell.

Reading day by day: Ex. 3:1-6; Ex. 32:1-6; Ex. 34:1-8; Isa. 37:8-23; Dan. 3:8-18; Acts 17:16-31; Rom. 1:18-32.

III

WHY FAITH IN GOD?

IT is a well-known fact, which may well cause the intelligent to pause, that some sort of belief in a higher power or powers, and some sort of worship, exists among all peoples. The religious ideas of many worshipers are vague and crude and superstitious. Too frequently the reverence due to one Supreme Being has been lost in a maze of demons, fetiches and charms. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the whole world over humanity looks beyond itself for powers, or a power, greater than self and related to human existence. And always is there a seeking for *personality,* either residing in or existing beyond the confines of the physical world. It is but natural to inquire how and whence this universal idea may have originated.

How Was the Idea of God First Born?

The simplest answer is that from childhood up people have been told by their parents that there is a God. Because in our home the folks talked and acted in that belief, we naturally accepted it and took God for granted. In somewhat similar

way the aborigines of Calabar entertained notions of animism and fetichism. This is simple enough; why should we go any further!

The trouble is, this is too simple. To stop with this would mark us simpletons. We are rationally forced to go further. Where did our folks get the idea? From their parents. And where did their parents get it? Let us push this back to its source. Where did our first ancestors get hold of the idea of God? For no parents told them about it. Somebody, somewhere, at the beginning of the line, did originate it, and ever since, apparently, every reasonable being has fallen right in with it. Certain possible ways suggest themselves.

1. That first human being to whom the idea of God, or of invisible powers, occurred, looked about him and saw material things all around, which neither he nor anyone else he had ever met could possibly make or have made. He observed phenomena in nature, such as sunsets and rainstorms, hail and lightning, winds and fogs, all far beyond the power of man to produce. How could he help looking beyond the material world for the source of those mighty forces!

2. But reason was not the only attribute in man whereby he might seek for God and find Him. There was also the heart. The finer feelings of man were touched in the course of his experiences. He learned to admire the beautiful things of earth. He enjoyed the singing of skylark and

nightingale. He sensed the tenderness of violet and forget-me-not; the nobleness of oak and pine. More than that, he learned to love. He found that behind the exterior of that other person there was an unseen self that answered to the unseen self hidden behind his own features. Ere long he learned that his love was the strongest power he possessed; it mastered him. Out of *love* he found himself willing to do what out of *fear* he could never have been forced to do. One soul had answered another soul. Might it be conceivable, then, that as behind the body of another he had discovered a soul, there might be such a personality also behind the phenomena of earth? Love led him to look further.

3. The human will must also have entered in; for it is the chief basis of character, and is so closely related to duty. Man realized himself at his best in the performance of duty, and at his worst in the neglect of duty. What will was there, superior to his own, that caused him ease or heaviness of heart, according to his ways? There must be a power in existence, similar to himself; but greater!

4. If man looked beyond himself because of his inner spirit, what of that invisible Being for whom he was unconsciously looking, because both reason and heart directed him? There is a saying in an old Book (Jer. 29:13), that was as true in the dawn of history as it is now, " If with all your

heart ye truly seek Me, ye shall ever surely find Me." Only in case there were no God would it be credible to think that man, amazed by the powers of nature, drawn by the things he admired and loved, and stimulated by conscience, should search for God without response on God's part. We know now, though primeval man may not have known it, that God looks for us before we ever look for Him. That first soul, that searched for the Invisible, received response. He felt in his inmost self that what he looked for existed. And when he spoke to his children, he spoke with conviction. He spoke with reason, heart and will.

There are those who say that the idea of God is purely a clinging to a shadow. Let us accept the statement for the moment. Then let us note how shadows are produced. Can there be a shadow anywhere, unless there be a substance somewhere, and a light to cause the shadow of that substance?

Historic Arguments for the Existence of God

The child and the philosopher may ask the same question regarding God. For there are basic problems that face us as soon as we begin to think in terms of eternities and infinities, and try to find the first great Source of all. Throughout the ages the keenest minds have set themselves to the solution of world-problems. Among their utterances those that concern our own reasons for believing

in God as a personal Being are by no means least. We shall endeavor briefly to present the leading arguments:

1. The ontological argument, so-called because it rests on our own make-up. Des Cartes, a French philosopher who was banished from his country by the Roman Church and spent his life publishing his works, first in Holland and, later, in Sweden, propounded this proposition: "We are finite," he said, "but we have within us an idea of the Infinite. We are imperfect; but we think of and idealize the All-Perfect. How could the idea of the Perfect come to the imperfect, or that of the Infinite make itself felt in the finite unless it were imparted to us? And who could impart it except One who is Himself infinite and perfect?"

2. The cosmological argument, so-called because it relates to the existence of the Cosmos, or world. Every effect, so goes the argument, is due to a cause that is great enough to produce the effect. The world about us presents to our eyes an effect that is greater than any cause we have ever experienced. The cause cannot lie in ourselves; it cannot lie in nature itself. Then it must be traced beyond self and nature. It leads us to that supernatural cause we call God.

3. The argument from design. The world as we observe it shows purpose; but purpose involves intelligence. When a piece of exquisite

music is rendered, the listener knows without being told that someone has prepared a suitable instrument; that a composer has prepared the piece that is being played, and that a musician is drawing the notes from the instrument. The instrument could not play itself. Similarly, when we see the changes of seasons, the alterations of day and night, the marvelous correspondences between heavenly bodies, the animal world dominated by man, then we know that these relationships could not have been established accidentally; nor could purpose have found expression without intelligence; for matter as we meet with it does not possess intelligence. A Mind was required to design and direct. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

4. The argument from need and supply. The universe is everywhere so arranged, this argument has it, that for needs there is supply. People grow hungry and there is food which they can secure. They get thirsty and there is water. This is equally true of the animal world, and of the rest of creation. Needs arise and there are supplies somewhere to meet these needs. While it does happen that need and supply do not meet at the exact place and time, where they are most suited to each other, yet it is always true that somewhere in the universe there is a supply for some need felt. But the needs of the human heart are the

greatest of all needs. When man says, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," is it conceivable that his prayer is in vain? When a soul cries out, "O, my Father!" is there no "Here, my child"? The physical world with its supply assures us that for our spiritual needs also there is adequate supply. But our souls need God. Therefore, there is a God.

5. Argument from moral justice. Again, there is the sense of right and wrong, inborn in every human being. By what measure shall right and wrong be meted if there be no God? Who is going to straighten out unevennesses between the oppressor and the oppressed? Who is finally to reach the evil-doer who escapes the clutches of earthly law? Jesus called attention to Dives and Lazarus, the one rolling in wealth, the other writhing in agony and rotting in poverty. The hope of a better world sustained poor Lazarus; but suppose there were no heaven? Suppose there were no God in heaven? There *ought* to be a final judgment and because there ought to be there is. The deepest thinker of modern times, Immanuel Kant, was able to argue the existence of God, and also the non-existence of God from pure reasoning; but when he took up the moral argument and considered right and wrong, then he called his readers back to the fact of God, duty and immortality.

6. Personal experience of God. This we must not call an argument; because it is of so much greater force than all the five arguments that have been stated and which are the fruition of clear, strong minds. Each argument alone is worthy of our serious consideration.

Still, it must be confessed that God is not brought to the human heart by rational arguments alone, or even supremely. For religion is not supremely an affair of the head; it is an affair as well of the heart and of the will. People who have failed to use their spiritual eyes and have centered their attention on the visible world have gradually grown blind. The light of heaven is too brilliant for them; it would hurt their eyes. They are spiritually devoid of eyesight, and every argument we might produce would fail of its effect. The task of proving God to them by reason is hopeless. In the Bible it is never even attempted. God is taken for granted all the way through. "In the beginning—God," are the Bible's first words. But throughout the Bible there are characters who come into personal touch with God. Anyone who is willing to read the Bible and to note the experiences of those men and women who lived in the presence of God, is on the way of growing convinced of the reality of God.

God can be proven unmistakably to every one of us, and He is daily being proved in human lives. His care for us, His patience, His friendship, His

great disapproval of sin, His infinite yearning for our love, all these may be keenly felt and of these we may bear witness by our godly ways and words. Such witness is the strongest proof of God and it is most convincing.

How Can We Know God?

Those Agnostics of whom we made mention in the previous chapter might have used at least one verse in the Bible in their defense, had they taken the trouble to peruse the Bible. It is a question asked with the evident expectation of a negative reply, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7.) Which is also in agreement with the suggestions of our previous paragraph; we cannot reach God by the ladder of pure reasoning. Not the brains but the heart finds God. Jesus in His high-priestly prayer (John 17:3) gave the world an astounding utterance, "This is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." We must know God, or we lose out altogether. How shall we go about it?

Do Others Know Us?

In a study of ways in which God may be known and to what degree, it should be helpful to consider how we ourselves may be known and to what degree. We are partly known by our appearance. Even the clothes we wear tell something of our

character. A neat person, however poor, does never appear shabby; while a slovenly person, however rich, does not look neat in a brand-new suit. Clothes do not *make* the man; but clothes *show* the man. Then there are facial expressions, and particularly of the eyes, whereby folks get an idea of our inner nature. Happiness beams out of the eyes; anger is shown in one's features; satisfaction can be made known without words; even hope and courage can be read from eyes and mouth. The body, too, takes its part in witnessing of the soul. Our ways of rising up and sitting down; our position in standing or sitting; the gait we strike in walking; the quickness or slowness of our motions; our mannerisms and idiosyncrasies all combine to make us known to others.

Again: there are the things we say, and the way in which we say them; the ideas conveyed by our words, and their purpose. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," so that sooner or later we are likely to show what we are by what we say.

At least as sure a criterion of character as those just mentioned are our actions. "Deeds speak louder than words." The person who voluntarily does right may with fair accuracy be judged as being right at heart. "Even a child is known by his doings." Our looks, our words, and our deeds are so many labels that mark our personality.

Yet, when all has been said, neither our clothes,

nor our facial expression, nor our general behavior, nor our words, nor yet our deeds *are* ourselves. There is an unseen, inner soul behind it all, as the center and source of these manifestations. "*As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.*" And who can know, for certain, what anyone of us thinks in his heart—except in so far as we are willing to let it be known? There is no certain way of knowing each other through and through. We know in part. We see through a glass darkly.

Ways of Knowing God

The ways we have mentioned by which others may be known apply in an infinitely higher sense to our ways of knowing God. We gain an idea of God through nature, because God has expressed Himself through these visible things and forces. "The heavens declare the glory of God," because God made them, and we may rightly judge a person's character by what he makes. In a sense these natural phenomena are expressive of God as our clothes are expressive of us. "Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2), says the poet to God. But nature is more than the mere garment of God. It has pleased Him to express divine attributes through nature. The beauty of the rose witnesses to the beauty of God. The majesty of the mountains proclaims that God is majestic; the delicacy of the tiniest flower witnesses to infinite graciousness. "Thy

righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep" (Psalms 36:6). There is a sense in which the Pantheist is right. As we express our minds through our bodies, so God expresses His mind through nature. And just as the architect of a great cathedral has found expression through the building he planned, so has God found limited expression and is still showing His character in a measure through the universe.

Our sovereign God has also manifested His nature by the way He controls and directs the affairs of the world. History is a wonderful record of God's ways with men. The Hebrew nation was typical of all nations. When they followed the gracious suggestions of their divine Leader the nation prospered; but when they went wandering after idols of other nations those very nations brought chastisement upon them. This has been true as well of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome; it is true of our modern nations. Four hundred years ago Spain was a mighty empire, sailing the Seven Seas. America lay at her feet. But instead of bringing good tidings to those peoples, Spain took from them their gold and silver. Then God put down Spain from among the nations of the earth. At that time,

"The voice of God to Holland came,
To Leyden by the sea,
'Rise up ye children without name,
My kings and priests to be.'"

But Holland, too, though in possession of far greater riches than Spain, by the light of the Reformation, centered her interest on spices and monopolies, refusing to send the glad tidings. Then Holland went down. Of late God spoke to Germany, "I am sending you the sons of the earth. Teach them My truth." But Germany taught "superman," instead of the grace of Christ. Now Germany has fallen.

In our own lives God has shown Himself even more clearly and more fully than in nature and in history; for He has shown His love and mercy, and these are the greatest of His attributes.

God has revealed Himself in words. He has spoken to humankind. We know Him by what He has said to us. In these studies we plan to devote a whole chapter to this mode of divine revelation. Suffice it here that the wonderful words of life show to us a wonderful, life-giving God.

God has revealed His character by deeds. Supreme among these is the gift of His only-begotten Son. For God is more than almighty, and more than holy and righteous. God is love.

The Infinite Perfection of God

There is a contemplative way that helps us to appreciate the nature of God, which is but rarely applied. Think of all the limitations and imperfections of human nature and eliminate these in

thinking of God. Man can watch over his dearest friends only a few hours without need of sleep. The great Shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Man grows old; God remains forever young. Man wearies soon; but God never wearies or faints. Man may forgive for a while; but soon loses his patience; God's pity and forgiveness are applied day after day. Man knows his neighborhood intimately; God knows the universe in its minutest details. Man began in time; God never began. Let the highest qualities of man be thought of to the nth power, and we have some vague idea of the infinitude of God.

God Cannot Be Defined or Classified

While standing at this point of vantage we may observe two facts that should aid us further in our estimate of God.

1. The Infinite cannot be defined; there can be no adequate definition of God. Defining infinity is a contradiction of terms. "Fines," means bounds, and God is boundless. It may be possible to make *a statement about* God; or to predicate something of Him; but this will always involve the silent confession that we are considering only a phase of God's being.

2. God cannot be classified; for He is supreme. Classification calls for similars and equals. But though man was made in the likeness of God, the similarity is that of creature and Creator, which

does not allow for categorizing. There is no equality. For this reason we cannot form a concept of God. There is no other being that fully explains Him.

God the Object of Eternal Study

Through nature, history, human life, the sacred Scriptures, and supremely through Jesus Christ we are daily learning about God. The moment will never come, neither in this world nor in that which is to come, when we shall "know the Almighty to perfection." His infinite nature, the harmony of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their relation within the Godhead and their relation to us, of these we shall learn ever more through the unmeasured aeons of eternity.

With the knowledge of God which we have received from the various sources already mentioned, we may form some such statement,—God is the one, infinite, spiritual Being, to whom the universe owes its origin, in whose likeness we are created, and to whom all things and beings are related; for in wisdom, justice and love He governs and sustains them all.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Learn from the members of the class their measure of belief in God, and sound their reasons. Allow them to criticize each other's reasons, and help each to defend his own.
2. Allow free expression on the argument in this

lesson that appealed most strongly, encouraging the stating of arguments not given in the lesson.

3. Spend a few minutes on the question of usefulness or futility of arguing with non-believers on this subject. Give room especially to reports from experience.

4. The suggestion, that others do not know us, may be emphasized. Do we agree? Do we *want* to be completely known? Do we know *ourselves* perfectly?

5. Secure expressions regarding ways in which more knowledge of God was and may still be acquired.

6. Talk over the changes on the parts of students in their own view of God; the experiences that have most definitely pointed to God; the use of prayer in relation to God.

7. Assign for the next lesson to one student a defense of the Unitarian and to another the defense of the Trinitarian doctrine.

For Further Research

What Shall I Believe?, A. H. Strong.

Can I Believe in God, the Father?, W. Newton Clarke.

Christian Doctrine, Ch. I, II, R. W. Dale.

Reading day by day: Ps. 23; Ps. 103; Isa. 6; Isa. 37; Jn. 5:19-26; Jn. 17:1-11; Jn. 14:1-9.

IV

THE TRIUNE BEING

THAT it would be far more difficult to solve the problems of the universe with God left out than with God as the source and center of all existence, most of us will agree. Every road when followed to the end leads to God, when we start reasoning of causes and purposes. The heart needs Him; the intellect listens to Him; the will bows to Him. But when it comes to the idea of a Triune God,—Father, Son and Holy Spirit,—then there is likely to be a somewhat different attitude. We readily see the need of one God; but why should we think of three divine persons!

Ideas Elsewhere of a Trinity

If our surmise that the Trinitarian doctrine is purely theoretical were correct, then it would be the more astonishing to find the same idea among non-Christian peoples that have mentally advanced beyond others. For not only the Apostles mention the triune Being repeatedly; but also the Hindus in India, the Aztecs in ancient Mexico, and Plato among the Greeks.

The Hindus tell of Brahm, the simple, primal being, who was the unconscious origin of all things. Not in time,—for eternity knows no earlier or later—but in the order of activity, Vishnu followed Brahm as the spirit which unfolded itself in the world and by means of it. This spirit has consciousness; because it touches the realms of day and of sense. Third, there is Shiva, the eternal being returning to unconsciousness. These three cooperating form the trinity of the Hindus.

Among the Mexicans of ancient days the teachings regarding God and His universe were strikingly similar. There was, to begin with, the unknown God out of whom the visible world came forth. Then there was the world-maker by whose agencies the immaterial and unsubstantial elements that had been brought forth, assumed substance and form. Finally, and finishing the work of making worlds, there was a sort of world-soul, that permeates all things and endows animate nature with life.

Plato, the great philosopher of Greece, thought, in his turn, of "The Idea," or the divine Being who is at the same time the origin of all things and the goal toward which all creation moves. God, the *Idea* of Plato, thought out the worlds that were to be and mapped out their destiny through the coming ages. He produced or created the unformed materials from which the universe was to be molded; but He left it in chaotic form.

The shaping and the forming, the imparting of order and beauty, was the work of the "Demiurge," or divine Artist, who is sometimes called Logos. But there was furthermore the World-Soul, which gave life to all things on the earth and in the heavens, and who sustained all things. This World-Soul was neither the Idea nor the Demiurge.

That from three nations so widely scattered, but each advanced beyond his neighbors in the scale of civilization and in ability of thinking, there did originate such closely identical teachings, should surely impress us deeply. When, then, in our own sacred Scriptures we find repeated testimony of three active persons in the Godhead; while at the same time we are asked to worship the one God, and these persons performing functions not unlike the functions of the persons in non-Christian trinities, it behoves us to give the matter most serious consideration.

Scriptural Testimony

The testimony of the Bible to the fact of the divine Trinity is, in the main, sixfold:

1. There seems to be conversation. God says, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), and (Gen. 11:7), "Let us go down."

2. There is mention of one by the other as

"he" and "him"; while they address each other with "thou" (Ps. 2; Ps. 110; Jn. 14-17).

3. There are definite and distinct relationships within the Trinity. The Father sends the Son, while the Son never sends the Father. Both Father and Son send the Holy Spirit, either alone or jointly; but the Holy Spirit does not send either Father or Son. The Holy Spirit commissions workers" (Acts 13:2-4).

4. The three are mentioned in each other's presence. At the occasion of the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, the Father spoke from heaven, and mentioned the Son (Matt. 3:16, 17). A threefold source of divine testimony is vouchsafed John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:4, 5), very obviously Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the Apostolic Benediction (II Cor. 13:14) mention is made of the three Persons.

5. Distinct activities are assigned to each of them. "In the beginning God created." Which is very similar to the teachings of Plato and of the old Mexicans. But, "All things were *made* by Him" (Jn. 1:3), is written of the Son of God. Of the Spirit of God it is said that he "brooded upon the waters," in those primeval days when man had not yet appeared.

6. If in the visible world the Father creates, the Son forms, and the Holy Spirit vitalizes, similar order is operating in the spiritual world. The Father so loves the world that He gives His Son,

a sacrifice for sin. The Son so completely surrenders to the will of the Father and so truly joins the Father's sympathy, that He gives up His heavenly home, becomes a servant and takes on Him the iniquities of us all. The Holy Spirit applies the life-giving grace divine to human hearts that turn to God in repentance. (Jn. 6:63; I Pt. 3:18).

Impressive witnesses have been summoned from India, Mexico and Greece. We honor the sages who have spoken, no matter from what land. But when from our own sacred writings we receive such strong, clear testimony, shall we ascribe to it less weight?

Human Reasons for the Triune Being

Apart from the Bible and away from ancient lore there are reasons within us that make it necessary to think of God not as a lone but as a Triune God.

1. The similarity between God and man. The human being, who thinks and feels and wills, is most like God of all His fair creation. But this must mean that what is true of us, and is nowise sinful, may be thought of also as true of God. And these are self-evident facts about ourselves:

a. We want and require fellowship. Although there are times when we long to be alone, it would mean an affliction, almost as grievous as death, to be shut out from the fel-

lowship of others. Solitary confinement is unnatural.

If this is true of us, what of God, after whose likeness we were created? Can we assume that, from all eternity, the Father existed in utter loneliness? If His nature is infinitely greater than ours, would not His social qualities be infinitely greater than ours, too? Would He not desire to be loved and would He not lavish love? It appears to be of the essence of God to be more than one person; unless eternal solitariness be conceded.

b. There is something like a dual personality in each of us. Lofty, helpful motives are to the fore one moment; degrading, selfish motives the next moment. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do," cries Paul (Rom. 7). But if within the same person there can be two such semi-personalities opposed to each other, why should it be deemed impossible that in God three personalities should perfectly agree with each other!

c. There are three mental powers that make up the human being—the intellectual powers, the emotional powers, and the volitional powers. These are not three different compartments within one human being; but the one being wholly thinking, wholly feeling, wholly willing. Yet, this one person may meet a beg-

gar who asks him for alms. The person looks upon the poor man's rags and feels sympathy. He is about to hand the wretch a piece of silver; when a whiff of breath reaches him, that makes him decide differently. The reason tells him that the fellow will use the money to secure more "white mule." The feelings, then, and the reason, will have it out between each other, and the will is to carry out the dictates of the winning powers. Carry this fact to three distinct powers within one person to infinity, and does not the reasonable possibility of personality again loom up?

2. There is need in the divine economy for three persons rather than one as the source of truth and harmony. Our divine Teacher, who came to reveal to men the marvelous grace of God, did not merely *teach* truth; He said, "I *am* the Truth." When Pilate asked Him, "What is truth?", He answered him not a word; for the Truth was standing before the Roman officer, who was too blind to see Him.

But how can a person *be* the Truth? Because truth cannot be made. Just as we cannot make time, but only use it economically; neither can we make space, but only adjust it carefully, because time and space are from eternity; so we cannot make truth; it is from all eternity. Any attempt at making truth would lead us into falsehood.

God Himself could not *make* truth. God *is* Truth, and Christ came to reveal it.

Let us go further into this. Truth always demands relationships. A magnetic needle is true when it points in a certain direction. It must be rightly related to the North Pole. A statement is true when it corresponds correctly with facts. A line is straight when it is the shortest distance between two points. But how could God be the Truth, if He were eternally alone? For then there would be no relationship. God, to be the Truth, or even to be true, must sustain true relationships. These true relationships were existing between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Christ came as the one Person to show the world this eternal relationship which is the source of all truth.

But there should not only be relationship; there should be harmony. And harmony requires a threefold existence. When two points have a straight line between them there is no harmony. But when three points are related to each other there is either harmony or discord. Symmetry, beauty, order, coordination, everything that is artistic and pointing toward perfection, must be composed of at least three parts. The perfect harmony between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forms the basis of all harmony in all the universe, and their perfectly true relationships are the standards of truth by which ultimately all truth must be gauged.

Not Three Beings, But Three Persons

Those who believe in God, but deny the Trinity, have customarily failed to distinguish between person and being on the part of God. They go too far in their comparison between God and man and insist there cannot be three persons unless there are three beings in the Godhead. Of course, if their contention is right, then we are wholly wrong; for we do not worship three Gods. We worship the one true God, in three Persons. This consideration requires still further our closest attention; for it treats of matters that are rarely touched upon in daily life, and some phases of which are obviously beyond our human experience.

We make a serious mistake when we confine the personalities in the Godhead to our human categories. The distinct mark of human personality is such freedom of will that one can differ from another and do what another person does not want him to do. To our human thinking this is the essence of liberty. We are free; therefore we can go contrary to the demands or desires of another. But in the divine Trinity the principle of contrariness does not exist. Fact is, of course, that the power of contrariness is not at all essential to freedom; it only seems so to us, because of our perversity of nature. If every one of us were ready to follow divine Truth, we would all agree and work harmoniously. The Holy Trinity

is in absolute agreement one with the other. What one Person of the Godhead wills, the Other wills. What One plans the Other plans. What is acceptable to the Father is acceptable equally to the Son. Their personalities know of no differences between them. Their will, feeling, and intellect are so perfectly united that they are a unity. Hence, our idea of human personality is not that perfect idea which is sustained in the Godhead, and we judge wrongly when we determine from our wrong opinions that there cannot be three Persons in one Divine Being.

There was a theologian, teaching at Ptolemais in upper Egypt the latter part of the third century A. D., who held that there is but one Person in the Godhead and that the Father is essentially that Person, with the Son and the Holy Spirit as manifestations of His personality. Had Sabellius said, one Being, he might have come nearer the truth than many trinitarians to-day, who think in terms of human persons when considering divine personality. For it is true that the Son of God coming to earth was a manifestation of God, "the express image of His substance" (Heb. 1:3). And Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Holy Spirit, too, has shown divine presence, at the baptism of Jesus; on the day of Pentecost; when leading God's children into truth; wherever fruits of Christian life abound.

But neither Sabellius' theory, nor the improvement of it just suggested, will suffice to impart to our minds a complete understanding of the identities and the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Infinity cannot be grasped. But infinity is not irrational. There is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity that militates against our reason. For the idea of three divine Persons in one divine Being goes beyond our reason only in the line of our reasoning. It does not deviate from it or run against it; because God is Truth. And through the untold ages yet to come the contemplation of this harmonious relation between the three Persons of the Godhead in the one Being will continue to fascinate and draw our souls Godward in worship.

The Holy Spirit

The personality of the Father is accepted by all Theists. The deity of the Son of God will be considered more intimately in a later chapter. The personality of the Holy Spirit requires in this connection at least a brief study. To many worshipers of God, the Holy Spirit is "IT." It seems so much easier to think of the Father and the Son as persons, and to address them as such, than to commune with the Holy Spirit. Yet, in the Benediction that is used every Sunday at the dismissal of the congregation, "the communion of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 13:13) forms the climax.

There is reason for this habit of religious thinking. The Old Testament acquaints us with God in a way that makes us naturally think of the Father. The New Testament tells us the story of the Son of God, who actually walked and talked on earth. We think of the Father's love and of the Son's self-sacrifice. But the activities of the Spirit are so invisible. Therefore, we, to whom the tangible, the audible, and the visible appeal so greatly, think less of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Although existing and active from all eternity, the Holy Spirit became more definitely related to the whole human race after Christ had completed His redemptive work. In the Old Testament He is usually mentioned as the Spirit of God. Jesus promises us the presence of the Spirit after His own departure (Jn. 8, 9), and in the world (Jn. 16:8). This divine presence is felt in the Church (Acts 13:2; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:22; Acts 2:47).

The Functions of the Holy Spirit

There are peculiar functions assigned to each of the three Persons, and those of the Holy Spirit are:

1. The giving of life,—which might be termed the motherly phase of divine activity.

    a. The Spirit imparted and does still impart life to all creation. (Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Ps. 104:29, 30; Isa. 32:14, 15.)

b. The Holy Spirit is the source of new birth for mankind. (Jn. 3:5; I Cor. 11:3; Ps. 51:11.)

c. The Spirit imparts to yielding hearts the power of bearing fruit. (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9.)

2. The teaching of God's will to listening hearts.

a. The Spirit of God imparts and stimulates natural wisdom. (Ex. 31:2-4; Job 32:8.) This remains true to-day. Flashes of genius that bring to the world great discoveries, are not customarily attributed to God's Spirit; but He is their source, nevertheless. And God's Spirit will speak to us, if we seek His instructions.

b. The Spirit reveals divine truth. (Jn. 16:13; I Cor. 2:10, 11.) This may be in the form of inspiration, dream, vision, or calling back to memory. It may be as possible to-day as it was in days long gone, but it must by its own necessity be in line with past revelation. And it should be forever remembered that in Jesus Christ God's supreme revelation was made to the world.

c. The Holy Spirit applies divine truth to the human heart. This will never cease. And for this we should ever look prayerfully; for only thus are we able to catch the meaning of God's most precious promises both for this life and for that which is to come.

3. The imparting of strength to weak humanity.

a. The name "Comforter" does not primarily mean "giver of consolation," but, centering on the stem "fort," it means "giver of fortitude" or strength. In this sense the Holy Spirit is supremely our daily Comforter; because His life-giving power may enter daily into our soul's fibre. (Rom. 8:15.)

b. The Holy Spirit assures us of divine Fatherhood, and thus imparts to us a sense of security in the midst of a trying world and in face of our own imperfections. (Rom. 5:2, 5; 14:17.)

4. The sanctifying of those who have begun the new life in Christ Jesus. This involves the daily growing in grace, the subduing of the old nature that is akin to the beast, and the growth of the new nature in righteousness and love after the order of Christ Jesus. (I Pt. 1:2; Eph. 4:24.)

Divine Order

There is perfect agreement among the Persons of the Godhead regarding their particular tasks. The Father plans; the Son works out the Father's plans; the Holy Spirit establishes the work of Father and Son. Yet, all are active together. "My Father worketh until now and I work," says Jesus (John 5:17). "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

There is, therefore, in the minds of the writers

of our sacred Scriptures not the slightest doubt regarding the oneness of God and His threefold Personality.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. The assigned papers on Unitarian and Trinitarian doctrines. Leave its discussion till later.
2. Compare as pieces of reliable testimony, Hindu, Old Mexican, Platonic and Bible teachings.
3. Set out in contrast definite tendencies for good and for evil as shown in historic personages.
4. Illustrate from experience the relationships between the human powers of mind, their harmonious working, their divergencies, and their mutual dependence.
5. Put on the blackboard after the names of each Person of the Godhead those operations that may rightly be assigned to each.
6. Discuss the Unitarianism of the Old Testament as compared with the Trinitarian teachings of the New Testament, and note factors that brought about the change.
7. Take up discussion of the two papers already read.
8. For the next lesson let every student write out what Christ has personally meant to him. Statements must be extremely concise.
9. Request careful review of previous lessons.

For Further Research

Christian Doctrine, Ch. VI, VII, R. W. Dale.

The Doctrine of the Trinity, Ch. VIII, J. R. Illingworth.

The Ministry of the Spirit, Ch. V, VI, A. J. Gordon.

What Shall I Believe?, A. H. Strong.

Reading day by day: Jn. 14:23-26; Jn. 20:19-28; Rom. 7:14-25; Eph. 4:1-7; Rom. 8:26, 27; I Cor. 2; I Pt. 1:1-5.

V

THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

IN a study of Christ as a Person we are led to think of His humanity and His deity and these two natures in their relationships; while a study of His work requires a consideration of His life and death with their significance for us.

The entire Church—as well Roman as Protestant, with the exception of the Unitarians—believes in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Son of man, two natures yet but one person. This wonderful fact of a divine and human nature in one Person has been taken for granted without questioning by most Christians; while some have purposely refrained from questioning because they feared that doubt or curiosity might indicate lack of faith or even sacrilege. But in these present studies we have not been taking things for granted. Rather have we sought for reasons for the faith that is in us. Our attitude has been that of the student—reverent, but persistent. Without presuming that the human mind is able to comprehend the Infinite, and to understand in full the ways of God with men, we have endeavored to

think God's thoughts after Him. In the same spirit of earnest and humble inquiry, and with prayer for the promised guidance of God's own Spirit, let us think of the union of God and man in the Person of Christ Jesus.

The Physical Body of Jesus

That in the days of Herod some nineteen hundred years ago a child was born at Bethlehem, who was named Jesus, whose mother's name was Mary, and the name of whose supposed father was Joseph, is considered a historic fact. There is no controversy about it. There is a difference of opinion, however, on the matter of Joseph's relation to the birth of Jesus. There are people who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, only-begotten, who also believe that Joseph was the physical father of Jesus.

That this would be possible, who of us may deny? For who are we to set limits to the power of God, or to map out for Him the ways in which He shall operate. Besides, it is in itself quite conceivable that the Second Person of the Godhead should dwell within a body that was produced in the natural, God-ordained processes of procreation. The first question is not, *how* the Son of God came to earth, but *that* He came to earth.

There are leading reasons, however, why the great majority of Christians are justified in their belief in the Virgin Birth.

1. Because the story of it, say in Matthew, forms an integral part of the Gospel. The same writer, who wrote the last twenty-six chapters, also wrote the first two chapters. There is not the slightest alteration in the use of language, in the manuscripts thus far discovered, that would set the story of the annunciation and the birth of Christ off by itself. Therefore, if we believe the Gospel, we should, in all fairness, believe the story of the Virgin Birth.

2. Jesus came to earth as Son of God and Son of man. It was necessary that His body should be perfectly human; hence the need of being born of a woman. It might not be most helpful, however, for the Son of man to be a Jew from both father's and mother's side. Jesus came into the world to be a brother to all of us, not simply of the Jews. His face and features, which, according to the Scriptures, remain with Him in the glorified life, might be of a more universal nature than the rather distinctive Hebrew face and features. Jesus is not the son of one people; but the Son of man, whom the Indian resembles, and the Chinese, and the African, as well as the Occidental. To the Jew, therefore, "there was no form or comeliness to him, that they should desire him." (Isa. 53:2.)

3. Had Joseph been the natural father of Jesus, his function would chiefly have been the imparting of vitality for growth to the cell in the body of Mary, that was to develop into the full-grown

body of Jesus. But the function of vitalizing is, as we have already observed, supremely the function of the Holy Spirit. Matthew informs us (ch. 1:18, 20) of this very fact; which is more elaborately confirmed by Luke (ch. 1:34, 35). And the complete integrity of Luke's Gospel is equally assured with that of Matthew. In both Gospels it is clearly stated that Joseph was *not* the father of Jesus; but that the Holy Spirit supplied the vitalizing energy. So that, while it would have been quite possible, so far as we short-sighted humans are able to judge, for God to have dwelt in a body of which both Joseph and Mary were the parents, we have small excuse for rejecting the clear testimonies of Scripture, which are so very reasonable.

The Wonderful Birth of Christ

Every human birth is a most marvelous occurrence. Dust and spirit, body and soul, are somehow brought together. Just how this can take place, it would be difficult for any of us to explain. But we know that it does take place. We have ascertained that without the physical apparatus of the brain and its gray matter there can be for us humans no thinking. It has been fully demonstrated that injury to the brain-cells brings injury to the sufferer's thinking. But how the mind works through the brain it would be difficult to explain. We know that it occurs. The

union of spirit and body on the part of a human being is a wonderful fact; but it is a fact. When Christ was born in Bethlehem there was taking place the most wonderful of all unions; for not merely was there in relation to that birth a coming together of soul and body; but with this union there was also united the nature of the Son of God.

We, who are unable to explain the presence of mind and body in such a way that one who reads or listens understands the processes step by step, we shall not attempt to explain the centering of two natures in the one Person Jesus Christ. But we have strong reasons for our faith in that fact.

Why Two Natures in Christ Jesus?

God is the supreme economist; He never does the futile or unnecessary. But He always takes care that the necessary is put into operation when His time comes. For centuries the human race had wandered ever farther from God; while the Father in heaven was planning all the while to send His Son to be the world's Redeemer. But man had sinned, and kept on sinning. Man, therefore, should experience the reward of sin. To a degree every sin brings its own punishment; but not in full. Only those who have come to think little of God do assert that all sin brings sufficient retribution. But those who have learned to adore God as the holy and benevolent Father, have also come to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. They

are convinced that divine punishment is due every sinner. It was necessary, therefore, that a *man* should suffer the punishment of the human race.

But every man had sinned and could bear only the punishment for his own sins. Not a human being through all the ages has ever had virtue to spare, whereby the iniquities of others might be counterbalanced. On the contrary, every human being is guilty. It required, then, a sinless man, to "take away the sins of the world"; one who could truly represent the human race as one of them, yet sinless. That man was Jesus, the son of Mary, born in the Bethlehem stable these many centuries ago.

It would be a serious misunderstanding of God, however, to think that He could punish humanity without Himself taking part in the suffering. And for two reasons God took part in the punishment for human transgression. First, because man alone was not strong enough. The infinite sins of the world called for infinite atonement. Had Jesus been man and nothing more, He could have suffered for His own sins; but He could not have carried the burdens of the world. For this the strength of God was requisite. This strength was supplied in the two natures, one of which was divine. The divine nature sustained Christ at only one point and for one purpose,—for the work of redeeming humanity. Jesus did not call in the forces of Deity to still His hunger, or to quench

His thirst, or to keep Him from growing weary; but when a struggling race of men needed divine assistance, then the God-man came with His help.

There was a second reason. When an earthly father punishes his child there is twofold suffering, and that of the true father is the greater. When a righteous God meets out justice among men, there is grief and anguish in the heart of God. There may be cruel fathers to whom the cries of a punished child mean nothing; but God is not so. In the Person of Christ Jesus the triune God came to earth and suffered *for* and *with* humanity. Therefore the God-man Christ Jesus.

The Twofold Name for the Twofold Nature

The name of Jesus was applied soon after the birth of the Bethlehem Babe, and always refers to our Saviour from the aspect of His humanity. Jesus, the man, did not exist as a conscious, living soul previous to that birth, any more than we so existed. The name Christ, on the other hand, refers invariably to the divine nature of our Redeemer. The Christ was not born at Bethlehem; but had existed from all eternity. Of Him it is written, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). Of Him Isaiah prophesied, more than eight hundred years in advance, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, . . . and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The

Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6.) Of Himself, thus pre-existent, Jesus testified, " Before Abraham was I am " (Jn. 8:58). Our divine Teacher also tells of heavenly things which He had witnessed before His birth (Jn. 16:28). It was this identifying of Himself with God which drew upon Him more than anything else He did or said, the wrath of the Jewish leaders.

To these sayings of our Lord may be added the testimony of Paul (Phil. 2:5-7), which, literally translated, reads, " Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, when He was existing in the same way in which God exists, did not regard His equality with God something to cling to, but emptied Himself."

The Sympathizing Jesus

The " emptying of Himself " on the part of the Son of God involves His becoming " in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin " (Heb. 4:15). The Babe Jesus was apparently as every other babe. In Luther's sweet " Cradle Hymn " we read:

" The little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes."

But that is the exercise of poetical license, for crying is about the only thing babes in swaddling clothes can enjoy, and it is certain that Mary's babe indulged in it heartily. For a year or so the

child could not walk. First rolling over, then going on all fours, then being able to stand up, and finally learning to walk, was the regular process. Similarly with the beginning of speech. In response to mother's cooing the babe made efforts to form words. Only very gradually a vocabulary was acquired. Jesus could not read the Hebrew language from the start. Mary taught Him to read and write. Later He memorized portions from the Old Testament. Every school child may go to Jesus with confidence of sympathy; because Jesus passed through the essentials of their experiences.

Jesus was an apprentice with His foster-father. It was needful for Him to master the carpenter's trade, to learn how to saw straight, to hammer correctly, to cut and carve an easy yoke. Later, when Joseph passed away, Jesus became in turn the teacher and trainer of His brothers and the supporter of a numerous family. The responsibilities of the head of the house rested on Him. Parents can go to Jesus, knowing of His experimental sympathy. Workmen as well as employers will find in Him one who knows.

In body Jesus must have had "the strength of ten, because His heart was pure." But Jesus knew hunger and thirst, weariness and grief. Finally, when the Cross was laid on His shoulders, He was too weak to carry it to Golgotha. Then there was still the agony of the Cross to suffer.

In every condition of life we can go to Jesus and receive His deepest sympathy; for from His own life He knows the " feelings of our infirmities."

The mental powers of Jesus were contingent upon His body with its nervous system culminating in the brain. The emptying of Himself included the limiting of Himself in powers of the intellect. The child Jesus had many questions to ask. It must have been a relief to Mary and Joseph to take Him to the Temple when He was twelve years of age, so that He could be " both hearing them and asking them questions," on meeting the noted teachers of that day. Had Jesus been a precocious child, then our children might not find in Him the sympathetic Helper they confidently expect. The Scriptures He could quote in manhood, He had acquired in childhood and youth. So human was He that " His own brethren believed not on Him " (Jn. 7:5); nor the people of Nazareth among whom He lived for nearly thirty years.

Jesus, Himself, during the deepest experiences of His life mentions His soul, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death " (Mk. 14:34), and at the moment of His death also His spirit, " Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit " (Lk. 23:46). These expressions are added evidences to the testimonies regarding His human nature.

The Work of Jesus Christ

When Jesus said, "My Father worketh until now and I also work," He was giving us an insight into the life He had lived before His coming into the flesh. The works of Jesus may be summed up under the following heads:

1. The forming of the worlds and all that they contain. "In the beginning was the Word . . . All things were made by Him." By which we understand that (Gen. 1:1) the Father created all things, causing chaos to be; while the Son brought order out of chaos, and gave form and beauty to creation. Further testimony to this is given us by Paul (Col. 1:16), and by the author of "Hebrews" (1:1-3).

2. Forming friendships with men in a personal way. As it is His nature to communicate and to give expression to divine thought, we are justified in believing that through the person of the expected Messiah, the Holy Trinity communicated preeminently with men. He who walked in Eden with our earliest ancestors during the cool of the evening; with Enoch until one day the two turned in at the gates of heaven; with Abraham at Mamre; with Moses during the desert journey, He was, we believe, the Son of God. Paul confirms this suggestion (I Cor. 10:4), and Jesus' mention of Himself before the days of Abraham does at least hint at it. His name, Father of ages (Isa. 9:6), also points in the same direction.

3. Living perfectly the divine program on earth. This involves three phases of His work:

a. Jesus is our supreme example; our ideal. The praises of the Unitarians are none too flattering. Here is all they say of Him: The Law and the Prophets were perfectly lived by Him. To approach His ways of living is to approach the plan of God with our own lives.

b. Jesus is our Counsellor. The wisdom of heaven was augmented by His personal taste of earth. Christ is the wisdom as well as the power of God (I Cor. 1:24); the Teacher come from God (Jn. 3:3). We can go to Him for sympathetic advice.

c. Jesus is the Great Physician. He went about doing good,—healing the sick, comforting the distressed, lifting the fallen, showing the way to the Father, and personally drawing others to the heart of God. Essentially this work He continues to do, through the activities of a faithful discipleship on earth, and by drawing lives toward Himself.

4. Giving His life in sacrifice for us. If Christ were only our Ideal, the case would give us despair; for we can never reach that Ideal. But Jesus is Himself "The Way," by surrendering His own life in sacrifice on the Cross. In His suffering for sin, He was our representative. "By His stripes, we are healed."

5. Christ Jesus is now our great High Priest,

who "ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). He was and still is our Mediator by which we reach the heart of the heavenly Father. He is preparing a place for us (Jn. 14:3), and in the life to come will walk with us in heavenly places (Eph. 2:5). Even now and here He is "with us always" (Matt. 28:20).

6. Christ Jesus is to be Judge on that great, last Day, when all shall be gathered before Him (Matt. 25:31, 32; Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42). His sympathy with human frailty, His wisdom augmented by human experience, and His kinship to our human nature, do peculiarly qualify Him for that stupendous task. Then, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus is the Christ." (Phil. 2:11.)

What We Owe to Christ

There are various "theories of the atonement," but there is one fact on which all evangelical Christians are agreed. Jesus has by His life and death deserved a full claim on the life of every one of us. The children of God everywhere are ready to confess that they could never have been what they are and could never have enjoyed their Christian privileges, had not Jesus Christ been willing to live His matchless life and to die His sacrificial death. As far as we are concerned, He accomplished the purpose for which He came to earth,

the reconciling of the world to God. We owe our life to Christ.

It follows that we are not first masters of our own life. Christ is our supreme Master. But God loved a whole world, and so did Christ. His purpose is not yet fulfilled, while a world is steeped in sin. We owe to Christ the redeeming of that world from sin. For that great redemptive work our lives must be living sacrifices to Him. The life and work of the Son of God culminating in His death, must be continued in the life and works of God's children, culminating in the death of self and the rising anew in Christ Jesus.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Have one-half of the students read what Christ has meant to them, and let the remainder verbally add to these testimonies.
2. Reverently, but frankly, take up the spiritual phase of every childbirth; then that of Christ's birth.
3. Consider what the world would have lost, had Christ come to dwell in a human body as God but not as man. Or if He had come purely as man but not as God.
4. Use every version and translation obtainable, of Phil. 2:6, and submit its meaning to the class.
5. Go over the life of Jesus, as a learner of the language, of His father's trade, of divine teachings, and of His environs, including men.
6. Picture Jesus in your own community to-day, and decide whether He is wanted there by the people.
7. Have the class write on paper and hand in at

next period, suggestions for the adjustment of affairs on earth so that Jesus may be wanted to abide.

8. Rapid review of previous lessons.

For Further Research

The Fact of Christ, P. Carnegie Simpson.

Christian Doctrine, Ch. III, IV, R. W. Dale.

The Christ We Forget, Ch. I, IX, P. Whitwell Wilson.

The Diviner Immanence, Ch. XI, Francis J. McConnell.

Reading day by day: Matt. 1:18-25; Isa. 9:6, 7; Jn. 1:1-14; Isa. 61:1-3; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-14; Jn. 10:1-11.

VI

THE WORD OF GOD

IF man is made in the likeness of God, then the natural characteristics of man that are not sinful, may be thought of as similar to characteristics of God. Man thinks and loves and wills, and so does God. From the nature of man at his best we are able to form an idea of the nature of God. The likeness between God and man points from normal human traits to divine traits.

Does God Speak?

Among the normal human traits, that of self-expression stands out pronouncedly. We need and we like to give expression to our thoughts, and we do so chiefly by medium of words. Silence has its place in human life; but communication claims an equal place. The person who never communicates, or even attempts to communicate, is abnormal. As we know, then, that the desire to converse is a normal, human trait, we may confidently ascribe the same characteristic to God. It is the nature of God to converse.

Previous to the creation of reasonable beings,

this conversation must have taken place between the Persons of the Godhead. There was also an expression of the divine mind in the creating and the forming of our visible universe, with the imparting of life within creation. The things that are seen reveal almightiness, divine beauty, and God-given laws, or righteousness. But in the material world there is no liberal evidence of divine love and forgiveness. The infinite God limited His self-expression in visible creation. Physical nature does not and cannot serve as a perfect medium for the thoughts of the Invisible. For a fuller revelation of God's thoughts there came into being a better agency when God made man.

How perfectly natural, then, was it to expect that God should converse with men! Here was at last a personality who possessed the power of reasoning, who was endowed with a desire for friendship, whose were the faculties of appreciation and love. It would have been strange, indeed, had God failed to converse with man. And after God had entered into fellowship with man, it would have been passing strange had man failed to tell others of his wonderful experience. For the situation presented not only a divine nature that was desirous to communicate; but also a human nature that was in dire need of divine communication. Man could not get along very well without divine counsel. While our first parents were still rejoicing in their primal purity, their

conversations with God were the natural outgrowth of their mutual friendship. God counseled with them as friend with friend. But after sin had entered in to break that glorious relation between God and man, the human mind grew perplexed and bewildered; the divine teaching regarding life became imperative. Without communication from above, man neither knew how, nor did he desire to walk the pathway of life. He found himself in need of warning, encouragement, and light.

We have these reasons, then, for believing there is *a* Word of God:

1. It is the nature of God to converse.

2. In time God gave partial expression of His mind through the visible universe; but the agency was not sufficient for the fuller expression of His sublimest attributes.

3. The human being was capable of fuller communication from God, and a more personal response to God than was the material world.

4. Man grew peculiarly needful of divine counsel.

Which is the Word of God?

Convinced of the fact of *a* Word of God in some form, it still remains for us to assure ourselves, which of the numerous sacred writings for which the title has been claimed, may really be *the* Word of God. From childhood up, we Christian

people have been accustomed to award that claim exclusively to the Bible. Not without valid reasons has this been our belief. No book in all the world has exerted so wholesome an influence on nations, communities, and individuals. No book has been accepted as authoritative by so many mighty minds, or has stimulated such vigorous thinking. Nevertheless, our customary faith has been subjected to merciless criticism, and we do well to found our faith on a sure basis.

In the main, popular beliefs regarding the Bible as the Word of God are divided as follows:

1. Those whom we have learned to know as Materialists, or Atheists, or Agnostics now appear as Rationalists. They reject the idea of any authority but their own reason, to which in some instances the authority of the reason on the part of others is added. These Rationalists are fond of claiming that they are the broadest and most liberal of all thinking people. The fact is, however, that none are narrower than they.

   a. The Rationalist reckons with the intellect alone. But the human being is not merely a thinking person; he is also a loving person, and a willing person. The whole human being should be operative when authority is in question. The reason alone, without the aid of will and feeling, is like a bean-pole, tall and thin, but lacking a strong foundation. It is certain to spin out theories

like spiders that spin cobwebs, out of themselves, without the test of life.

b. The Rationalist cannot *make* truth any more than we can make truth. We cannot make time; we are able to use time economically. We cannot make space; but are able to employ space prudently. Time and space are from all eternity. Truth, too, is from eternity. We may get hold of it and think upon it; but we can never make truth. Invented truth is falsehood. And the final revelation of truth is of God.

2. Pantheists, usually known, too, as liberal, have much more in their favor than Rationalists. They hold that inasmuch as all truth is divine, the Bible is daily being written, page by page, and will be written world without end. For old things pass away and all things are ever becoming new.

This sounds attractive, does it not? Just as the Pantheistic philosophy is attractive. Like it, this idea of divine revelation contains much truth. For if it is the nature of God to communicate, then such communication should continue through the ages. And it does. But scarcely in the manner which the Pantheists assert.

a. Divine revelation does not come from a personal God, according to the Pantheist; but is the world-mind coming to self-consciousness. As we are part of that mind, there is this mental activity within us that is but a

spark of the great flame of divine thought. Every thought, therefore, that comes to us, is divine and authoritative,—thoughts for evil as well as thoughts for good. But for us this assertion wholly disqualifies human thought as authoritative.

b. The Pantheist neglects the fact of Christ as the supreme revelation of God. The Word of God, as we accept it, points in its earlier writings toward the coming Son of God, then portrays to us the life and teachings of the Son of God, and goes on to centralize our hearts and minds still on the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. So is Christ the center of the whole Bible. We believe that God still communicates with men; but we hold that in the Bible there is germinally the presentation of the whole truth of God toward man. We read other books by those who testify of their communion with God, and we find these edifying so long as they are in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. No sooner do they depart from that teaching, than we sense an erring spirit, which it were hurtful for us to follow.

3. There is a third group, represented by the Roman Catholics, who hold that God's Word is most surely revealed when the greatest company of learned and pious Christian people gather in

council and set down a creed to which the great majority of them agrees. This creed, then, becomes authoritative for the world.

Our friends from Rome have approached the right conception more nearly than have Rationalists and Pantheists. It was in some such councils as they suggest that the books of our Bible were determined upon. Unfortunately, in those days in which the creeds of Roman Catholics were formed, the Church was most dreadfully lack in morals. A number of her counsellors were neither learned nor pious. It goes without saying that children of the Reformation cannot conscientiously accept the decrees of those Councils as their rule of faith and practice.

It may be added by way of reminder, that those Councils, too, were unable to make truth; they could only discover it at best.

4. Exactly opposite to Roman Catholics are the Friends, or Quakers. To them the Word of God, carrying highest authority, is the still, small voice within each worshiper.

This carries the tenderest of suggestions; for God speaks to His people individually. It were well for each of us to listen sharply for the voice divine. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that revelation of that kind remains extremely individualistic. God's truth must be universally applicable. But who shall guarantee to me the revelation that came to you; unless a similar word

has reached me, too, either direct from God or from the acknowledged revelation of God elsewhere? The witness of one heart needs to be witnessed to from other hearts. As Jesus said, "Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." (Matt. 18:16.)

Why Accept the Bible?

It is at least interesting to know that sacred writings have been accepted authoritatively among the most advanced peoples. The writings of Confucius became the rules of conduct for all China. The writings of priests and magi in Egypt and Babylon were accepted as laws by the respective peoples. The Greeks bowed to the oracles of Delphi. The Romans had their Sibylline books. Mohammed was not slow to take advantage of these popular feelings and speedily wrote the Koran. To this day men and women, who have wished to start a cult, have diligently set themselves to writing,—witness Joseph Smith, Mrs. Eddy, Pastor Russell, and others of their type.

This still leaves us with the question, "Why select the Bible?" The reasons are so manifold that a full enumeration of them would unduly lengthen these discussions. A few leading reasons should suffice, if we keep in mind that God by His own nature inclines to make Himself known in words as well as in works.

1. The contents of the Bible appeal to the

human heart at its best. There are portions in other sacred books that make a strong appeal; but almost invariably other portions in the same books are unspeakably disgusting; they breathe so low a spirit.

a. The Bible is a unit in moral and spiritual loftiness. Sin is everywhere denounced as sin, and he who commits it, no matter what his position, is declared guilty. But righteousness, truth, altruism, and grace are consistently exalted.

b. The warnings, commands, encouragements, and suggestions of the Bible are so perfectly wholesome and true. We may not always relish the humility they demand, or the denials they expect; but we know they are irrefutably the best.

c. The promises of the Bible meet our hopes, and they prove true in life. God is behind and underneath them; we never commit mistakes by acting on them.

2. Wherever the Bible has been practiced it has been for the "healing of the nations." It is written, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The fruits of the Bible are good; they witness to its divine origin. Our American education has its origin in Bible study. Our colleges were first founded for sake of Bible study. Our hospitals and charitable homes are the results of Bible teaching. Prohibition, the abolition of slavery,

child-labor laws, woman's suffrage, in short, all wholesome measures are the consequences of Bible teaching. Sin and the Bible are not congenial together. Where one rules, the other is rejected. The love of God and of man form the supreme teachings of the Bible and they also form the greatest joys of life.

3. The centre of the Bible is Jesus Christ. Those who do not accept the Bible as authoritative, do usually hesitate before wholly denying Christ. But the authority and standard of Christ are rooted and grounded in our acceptance of the Bible. The Gospels that were written for no purpose but to tell of Him, could never have portrayed His perfect character, had its writers been untrue men. All other portions of the Bible are in full agreement with the Gospels. The written Word which we know as our Bible, is for the express purpose of revealing to mankind "The Word made flesh." Therefore, we accept it as the Word of God.

The Divine-Human Quality of the Bible

As Jesus Christ is both God and man, so is the Bible a product of divine and human agency. The men who wrote this Book came out of the presence of God. They had been divinely led and they spoke from their experience with the Eternal. In what way the divine and human agencies blended

in the production of the Bible may be made clearer by a look at the life and writings of Hosea.

The prophet Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during the days of Jeroboam II. The people enjoyed temporal prosperity and trusted, therefore, that all was well with them. But they forgot God, worshiped idols, and were fast moving toward their doom. In the days of Moses, Jehovah had entered into a relation of marriage with Israel. He was the husband; they were His wife, similar to the New Testament idea of Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church, which is His Bride.

When the people continued in their wanderings away from Jehovah, He commissioned Hosea to act out his part in a sacred drama, in which Israel's wanderings and Jehovah's faithfulness might be portrayed. The prophet married a woman by the name of Gomer, apparently of none too respectable character. But Gomer lived with her husband for a year or two in happiness. Then a former lover came to that home and persuaded her to leave Hosea with him. In time, that seducer was through with her and sold her into white slavery. Then the word of God came to Hosea the second time, bidding him to redeem the woman from her degradation and to take her home. Hosea went searching for her till he found her; paid the redemptive price, and took her home again.

No greater bitterness could eat into a man's soul than what Hosea had experienced. But it was analogous to the grief that comes to the heart of God when His children wander away from Him. Hosea's love for Gomer was only a faint echo of God's love for us, and was symbolic of it. Drinking that bitter cup prepared the prophet for the writing of the Gospel of the Old Testament, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely" (ch. 14:4). How could he have penned such words, had not this personal experience come to him?

Essentially, what was true of the causes and occasions that brought forth Hosea's prophecy, is true of the entire Bible. It was necessary for the sacred writers first to taste the meaning of divine love and to see the righteousness of God operative within them and about them, before they could convey their teachings to others. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were men of deep, personal experience with God. They spoke and wrote of what they felt. They yielded to the influences of the Spirit. They allowed God to take control of their steps. They enjoyed conversations with the heavenly Father. They looked at the world from the standpoint of heaven. At times even in their sleep their communion with God continued and they dreamed of things to be. Or in the daytime their thoughts were so completely centered

on God that they saw visions. They were spirit-moved.

Similar experiences came to the Apostles and their most intimate companions from whose pens we have the New Testament. They let themselves be led by the Promised Spirit; their theme was Jesus Christ.

Parts Less Vital, But True

Not all the Scriptures were produced under such white-heat as Hosea felt in his heart. Such books as "Kings," and "Chronicles," did not result from personal experience so much as from secretarial records. Nothing has thus far appeared to gainsay their accuracy. The men who sifted all writings, and judged these books sufficiently inspired to keep company with "Moses and the Prophets," considered their records accurate. We do not depend upon them for our salvation; but we are glad to peruse their contents; for here and there we discover wonderful touches of divine-human truth.

There are portions in the writings of Moses which Jesus no longer accepts as binding (Matt. 19:8), and which, accordingly, the church may still read with interest, but need no longer follow as a rule of conduct. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is not the teaching of Jesus. In similar way the Apostle Paul suggests that some of his writings are authoritative because they

are given of God; while others are purely suggestive; because they are born of his own mind, "But to the rest say I, not the Lord" (I Cor. 7:12). In such a book as Job one must continuously be on his guard to discern what sayings might claim authority and what parts are human invention.

The safe rule in all cases is the touchstone of Christ's life and teaching. Whatever disagrees with that cannot be authoritative for us.

The Formation of the Canon

By "canon" is meant the whole Bible as accepted by the Church. The word itself denotes a measuring-rod, and this is happily indicative of the way in which our present Bible has gained its place of honor. Men, who were presumably qualified to judge, applied tests to the writings of their day for which divine authority was claimed. They sifted out what seemed unworthy and retained what appealed to them as of divine origin.

This sifting began among the Hebrews. Such men as Ezra, in company with leading scholars of that day, subjected to the closest scrutiny each book, compared it with such accepted writings as the Law of Moses, and accepted or rejected accordingly. Usually, a whole book was thus accepted when every part rang true, or rejected if parts, that evidently belonged to the book, did not ring true. Through a similar process the New

Testament books have been chosen; though the sifting seems to have taken place more generally by the whole Church. Naturally, that which was out of harmony with the abiding teachings of the Old Testament was not admitted in the New Testament. Again, only what was written by the Apostles or their intimate companions received a place in the Canon.

The basis of this rule has already been intimated. The teachings and the life of Jesus Christ stand supreme before the Church, containing the germs of all truth necessary for salvation and for the governing of human behavior.

These writings have been copied and translated; not one of the original writings is now among us. The majority of Christian people read the Bible in their own language, translated for them by men who are supposed to understand both the original and their own native tongue. There is unquestionably an element of risk in this. But copies and translations have been diligently compared and we know that our American Bible, in whatever version, presents essentially the messages of God to our hearts. For accuracy, the latest versions, written by true scholars, are almost certain to be the best.

Our Bible is justly called the Word of God. It comes to us from God through divinely chosen men, who were under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Purpose of the Bible

The purpose of the Bible is not to acquaint us with scientific facts; or to save us the work of thinking out the world's problems. But whatever statements the Bible contains regarding scientific facts have not thus far been refuted by the latest discoveries of science. And thinking is invariably stimulated by a study of the Bible. The one great purpose of the Bible is to make known God's thoughts of righteousness and grace toward humankind. Through no other message may we understand so fully the love of our heavenly Father, Who asks us to repent from our sins and to turn to Him, that we may walk the way of life with Jesus Christ as our Companion.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Elicit arguments against the blind acceptance of the Bible and then turn to the Bible itself, whether such acceptance is required.
2. If among the members of the class there should come a clash between their reason and the Bible, where would their decision lie?
3. If it should come to a clash between the reason and the assured mandate of God, where must the decision lie?
4. Let each class member suggest portions of the Bible that have supremely appealed to him. Combine these portions and see what essentials are lacking.
5. Discuss an "Abbreviated Bible."
6. Let there be personal testimony of "The Inner Voice," and discuss its value.
7. Have the group formulate anew their harmonious Creed, and consider the virtues and dangers of requiring that Creed from others.

8. Have several tell what influence the Bible has had on their plans, actions, and views of life.

9. Assign for Bible reading, Gen. 1 and 2; Psalm 139.

For Further Research

Our Reasonable Faith, Ch. I, Park Hays Miller.

God's Message to the Human Soul, Ch. II, III, John Watson (Ian Maclaren).

The Divine Inspiration of the Bible, Ch. I, W. E. Vine.

The Bible the Word of God, Ch. II, F. Bettex.

Reading day by day: Isa. 55; Ps. 34:11-18; Ps. 119:9-16; Jn. 5:39-47; Jn. 10:27-36; I Pt. 1:16-25; II Tim. 3:14-17.

VII

MAN'S ORIGIN AND NATURE

SIX hundred years before the birth of Jesus there lived the first philosopher, some of whose sayings have been preserved. Thales said, "Know thyself." But people paid little attention to his words, until Socrates repeated his epigram, "Know thyself." To him only a few did listen. In more modern times Alexander Pope wrote a poem, entitled, "An Essay on Man," the first line of which runs, "The proper study of mankind is man." In his day psychology began to be studied with some zest, if not with great accuracy. The last subject human beings feel inclined to study is self. In this chapter we plan to turn the light on ourselves in our relation to God and to each other.

How Did We Come Into Being?

Just as there are in the main three schools of thought regarding God and the world, so are there three leading views of our origin.

1. The materialistic view. The human body is claimed to have passed through an infinite series of stages from the primeval cell to its present stature by the course of natural law and progress. Moving onward in the animal world by dint of in-

herent stimulus and acquired capacity, the animal now called man, came to surpass all other animals and grew into possession of the earth's master-brain. The senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, and whatever other senses he may possess or may have possessed, played their part so well, that their constant messages through the nervous system originated a sort of headquarters in the cranium, at which main ganglion the work of calculating, reasoning, and deciding became the order of the day. For all practical purposes it may be admitted that man has a mind; but only while sensations last. Impressions through the senses act upon the nervous system and stimulate reaction. Of these actions and reactions life consists. There is no unseen self behind the scenes; no free will to choose between the better and the worse. Man is an animated machine, acting in every instance according to inherited tendencies and the influences of environment. The human soul is nothing more than a concentrated series of sensations. At death sensations cease; hence, there is then no more soul. This theory was propounded years ago by David Hume and is still rife among modern Materialists. In fact, with many students of psychology the sum and substance of their interests is biology. Only that has meaning to them, into which they can plunge the knife, or which they can put on the scales.

What pessimism and melancholy this view of

human existence would bring us regarding the future life we shall consider later. Let us see what it means here and now.

a. The idea of a temporary soul as a resultant of the sensations, has little in its favor, when other animals with keener senses are made a subject of study. The eagle can see farther and more keenly than man; the mole can feel more acutely; the dog is a more accurate smeller; the wolf can hear better, and, from all appearances, the pig enjoys as strong a taste as man. Why did not within their bodies some sort of soul develop? Man's senses are comparatively weak; why such great results from such insignificant causes? Yet, without acknowledgment of the hand of God in the making of man, the materialist is bound by his theories to find this material cause.

b. But suppose men's senses *had* been keener from ages back until manhood was reached, how did this happen? Was it environment? Or native initiative? This question touches not merely the making of man, but it concerns the whole scheme of materialistic evolution. Initiative has to be posited somewhere; but the materialist refuses to posit it in God.

c. This teaching puts our kinship with brutes and vegetables and the mineral world

alone, and not with God. Acknowledging a phase of life, that constantly relates us to matter; we also claim a higher relationship and that with God Himself.

d. Our animal being without divine kinship calls for expression through the body only. Perfect expression is then ascertained by following the brute instincts of selfishness, anger, greed and lust. This we see actually in operation on the part of out-and-out materialists. They hate service, despise humility, exult in pride, revel in free-love, and evermore seek their own.

e. The evils just enumerated, and countless others that naturally follow in their train, are not considered sins by the Materialist; they are physical impressions. If they should deserve occasional criticism because of their excesses, they must be regarded as steps upward on the ladder of civilization.

f. Inasmuch as this life soon ends and there is no hereafter, the old proverb of the libertine is still heard, "Let us eat and drink and be merry; for to-morrow we shall die." How difficult for humans with unattained ideals to subscribe to such a philosophy of life, or even to understand the aims and aspirations of those who do subscribe to this philosophy! Spiritually those who so think and live do die.

2. The Pantheistic view. This view of human

life also agrees with the general trend of the Pantheistic world-view that has been previously considered. Assuming that God is all, and all is God, the presence of God is specially manifest in the human being. Through the human mind the thoughts of God-nature find their highest and clearest utterances. From the days of the earliest cell from which man sprang, until now, the divine man has gradually unfolded itself. This process will continue world without end. "Some call it evolution, and others call it God."

As usual this Pantheistic view looks pretty, and sounds sweet, and very wise. As usual, also, a closer look reveals less amiable features of face and sound of voice. The difference between Pantheism and Materialism is largely one of words and phrases.

a. When man forms part of the world-soul, his individuality, his personal nature has been sacrificed. This is equally true of such cults as Christian Science, in which Mrs. Eddy, attracted by what she could ascertain of Pantheism, gave up the idea of persons, that a universal activity might be evolved.

b. When man collectively forms all there is of God, there is no God remaining, either, whom man may worship; except this sum-total of human souls. This is what actually happens in a Christian Science Prayer Meet-

ing. It may prove interesting and flattering; but our personal Father is out of it.

c. As with the Materialist, so there is in Pantheism no sin; for man is part and parcel of the Eternal; who, of course, cannot sin. The nearest approach to sin is error, and that will surely be corrected in time.

In some form the teachings just stated and considered are held by all those who do not accept the Christian view. There are attractive phases to them, but a closer examination makes them abhorrent. Unless we are thoroughly versed in the right conceptions, we are certain to sway our souls in the wrong direction. But if we fully understand our Christian teachings we are immune to contagion.

3. The Christian view. The Christian looks on human life as brought into existence by God, not in the general way in which the mineral and animal worlds were created and formed; but in a far more intimate way. The Christian is convinced that man is supremely a soul, and that as a soul thinking, willing, and feeling, he bears resemblance to God. He also knows that his body comes from the dust and will eventually return to dust by the natural processes of human life, and that the tendencies and powers of that body show much resemblance to the tendencies and powers of animals. Essentially, all Christians are agreed as to their origin from God, their present relationship with God,

and their ultimate destiny in God. In unessentials there is not full agreement. We might, therefore, omit these minor matters in our present studies. But because on the one hand some good people mistake these unessentials for essentials, and on the other hand whole groups of people who have missed their Christian training are possessed by materialistic or Pantheistic views, we are willing to review the two Christian presentations. Remember that the essential question never is or can be, *how* God made man; but *whether* God made man. And on the latter there is full agreement.

a. Many devout believers maintain that God on the sixth day of creation took earth, fashioned it into the form of the human body, including bones, nerves, muscles, hair, brain, and everything. Into this form Jehovah imparted His living breath and man became a living soul.

b. Many devout believers hold that the first chapters of "Genesis" are a poetic presentation of a sublime fact, true because ascribing to God the making of man with his physical nature coming from the earth, and his spiritual nature derived from God; but not an effort to describe scientifically the processes whereby God brought man into the world. They believe that God directed the creative forces that from stage to stage out of cell-life and originally from the earth it-

self shaped the body of man-to-be in a way generally similar to the development of the human fœtus in its prenatal stages to this day. They believe that according to the Bible story, when the bodily organism had reached completeness, the divine touch imparted that personal essence that was after the likeness of God, which distinguished man from all creation, as a thinking, feeling, willing being, on whom responsibilities rested, and to whom immortality was granted.

Reasons for the Christian View

The fact of God and the fact of the human soul stand or fall together. If there is no God, there is no place in the world's economy for a human soul. If there is no human soul, it does not concern us whether there is a God. We have in a previous chapter considered our reasons for believing in God. Let us briefly state reasons for believing this body of ours is the dwelling-place of a soul.

1. The spiritual direction of the universe suggests a spiritual direction of the human body. There is purpose evident in the world; there is purpose equally evident in our behavior. And purpose points to personality.

2. God shows an interest in man that cannot be accounted for except for personality. One man, Jesus says, is worth more to God than a whole

physical world. Nothing but soul-value could weigh thus heavily in the scales of heaven.

3. Man's tendency to worship God reveals a force within him that must be spiritual. For it is a search for fellowship beyond brute creation. It witnesses to man's kinship with God.

4. The actual capacity of man for thought speaks volumes on behalf of his origin. Descartes, one of the earliest philosophers of modern times, exclaimed, *Cogito, ergo sum,*—"I think, therefore I am." If necessary we might even say, "I doubt, therefore I am." For the very fact that we are able to doubt the existence of God and the presence of a soul within us, is proof of our identity as a rational being, and with it is proof of God.

5. There are resident in us even greater powers than those of the intellect. We can love, we can admire ideals and strive toward them. We are able to suffer wrong that good may be established. These fruitions are not of the body; they have their source in a soul that is made in the likeness of God.

We Ought; But Are We Able?

Immanuel Kant once exclaimed, "I ought, therefore I can." The same statement has been voiced by many people, including Christians. It sounds so reasonable. Surely, nothing must be expected of me but what I am able to do! Jesus said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) Either, there-

fore, we can be perfect, or the requirement is unjust. Or is there, perhaps, a third possibility? Has God made man perfect; and has man voluntarily altered his capacity by acting against the plan of God?

The answer is given us in the earlier chapters of "Genesis." God looked upon His handiwork, man included, and "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Later, man, this most wonderful handiwork of God, to whom the Almighty had imparted something of His own sovereignty, set his will against the divine will. Had he not possessed that power, he could not have been true man; but he abused his gift. There occurred a break in his relationship with God. This act of disobedience made itself felt to the depths of man's nature. The nerves even, that had served to make response to temptation, became a path along which similar responses might more readily be made. The Bible calls it corruption. If the body was thus affected by sin, how much more the soul!

Man, as God made him, could say, "I ought, therefore I can." But man, as he placed himself, could no longer say with that same confidence, "I can." His splendid powers were marred; his resisting forces were lowered. When his first child was born, there was a handicap for the little one, of which his parents had not known before they sinned. Besides, the environment of sinful parents was not so congenial to that growing life, as had

been the environment of the parents before they committed evil. In every way the entrance of sin had wrought its terrible havoc.

What Is Sin?

The word sin sounds no longer familiar; not because sinning is an unfamiliar activity; but because the heinousness of sin is so generally laughed out of court. But this does not alter the fact of sin. We have already taken notice of Materialists and Pantheists to whom the word "sin" has an odd sound. There is a group of people tinctured with both Christianity and Pantheism, to some extent also with Materialism, who have their own idea of sin. The greatest mistake anyone can commit, they hold, is to let his own pleasure be regarded of greater importance than the pleasure of another. Sin, then, is selfishness. If everybody would quit rooting for self and would think sufficiently of others, Eden would be back on earth again.

This theory of our moralists is true so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. Christians look at life in relation to God first; then come their fellow-men. David cried out, "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). No matter against whom sin has been committed, its greatest evil is that God has been disobeyed. This evil manifests itself in three ways,

1. Sin brings about the loss of communion and friendship with God. This is its most deplorable feature. Our own children come to meet us with happy faces and outstretched hands, till one day they have been disobedient. We expected to meet them joyously; but they mope. This happened when our first parents had sinned. When God came for a walk with them, they were hiding behind the bushes.

2. Sin acknowledges the mastery of our animal nature over the God-implanted spirit. It is a denial of our likeness to God and puts us on the level of the brute. We have ideals, inspired of God, but these we let sink to follow physical instincts. As God is greater than His world, so is the soul greater than the body; but sin tends to reverse this relation. It puts the soul in a grade below the body.

3. Sin hurts our fellow-men. At times our sins are directed against our equals. We commit those selfish sins of which moralists rightly speak. We wilfully hurt others, that we may gain some advantage. At other times this is not our purpose; but sin always leads to this. For when we sin, we disqualify ourselves for the service of God on behalf of men. Where we might have helped, we fail. Others counted on us; but we disappoint them. Even their faith in God may suffer when we, who have confessed His name, go contrary to His will.

The Consequences of Sin

We have already intimated the terrible results of sin. Briefly may we reiterate:

1. Sin causes physical deterioration. The human face shows the presence and the effects of sin.

> *"Beautiful thoughts make a beautiful soul*
> *And a beautiful soul makes a beautiful face."*

2. Sin causes moral and spiritual deterioration. With every act of sin the resisting power lessens; it becomes more difficult to refrain from sin.

3. Sin causes a hardening of the heart. A tendency to justify oneself arises, together with a diminishing warning of conscience. The place for repentance recedes with every new sin.

4. Sin dishonors man's Maker. Because there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance (Lk. 15), therefore it has been taken for granted all too readily that sin is in a sense necessary to bring out the greater glory of divine grace. But this opinion is altogether beside the truth. Sin in itself never brings honor to God; it casts dishonor on His name. Divine warnings against sin and the explicit teachings of our Lord combine to oust any rights that sin might claim for its existence.

a. Divine warnings. A compilation of the innumerable warnings in the Bible against

sin would require the quoting of nearly half the divine messages. A synopsis of all such teachings is found in the Decalogue. It is scarcely conceivable, however, that God should first issue commands and then feel honored in their breach. Divine commands and warnings were given in order to procure obedience. The disobedience recorded in the Bible is like the children's slamming doors into their parents' faces.

b. Definite teaching of Jesus. In the second parable of Luke, the fifteenth chapter, Jesus tells of a woman who had received ten pieces of silver. We know from oriental customs that this was her wedding present and was given as a pledge and seal of marriage. To lose one piece would mean disturbance in their marriage relations; it would suggest a break. One day she discovered to her horror that a piece was gone. She locked the door immediately, fearing lest any should enter and discover her embarrassment. She lit a candle, took a broom, and swept every nook and corner of the house, fearful all the while lest someone might knock for entrance. At last, to her delight, she found the piece. She put it back in its place; then opened the door and conveyed her joy to the neighbors. Her honor had been restored.

So, Jesus intimates, the honor of our heavenly

Father is affected by our sins. We are His handiwork. Whatever the reason of our sinning, when we do sin, we cast reflection on our Maker. But when we return to Him, then gladness fills His heart and shines from His blessed face, so that those about Him grow aware of His fatherly joy. With this wonderful story agrees the song in Ephrata's fields, "Glory to God in the highest." And with this teaching agrees the confession of David, "Against Thee only have I sinned." The greatest evil of sin is that it puts our Maker in a false position.

5. Sin leads to judgment. Our first judgment on sin is our own sense of guilt. We cannot get away from ourselves; but are our own closest companions. Self-condemnation is a foretaste of eternal punishment. But if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, Who knoweth all things. Our great Creator endowed us with free will. The theory of mechanism, so popularly pleaded in our courts to condone crime, is as godless as crime itself. We sin from choice. Blame rests on us for our sinning. Excuses are vain. We are accountable to self, to neighbor, and to God for every sin. There is no escape from the great tribunal, except by way of repentance and of Christ.

Deliverance from sin is by the way of our divine Redeemer, who became sin for us. His won-

derful life and death for our salvation will form the subject of our next study.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Open discussion on ways of making the presence of Jesus in the community congenial. This will lead readily to the day's lesson.
2. Ask one of the members to picture verbally the literal interpretation of the "Genesis" creation story. Compare with this the prayer of Psalm 139, and let someone, who favors the theistic theory of evolution, tell that side of it.
3. Bring out the similarity between the human body and soul on the one hand, and the physical universe and God on the other hand. Be very careful in the drawing of inferences.
4. Compare degrees of intelligence among animals; between different men; between animal and man.
5. Discuss the problem of obligation and ability as it now appears in daily life.
6. Center on the Temptation of Jesus; compare it with The Lord's Prayer, and with the Shepherd Psalm, relative to sin and safety.
7. Assign for next period one paper on, Individual need of salvation; another on, Social need of salvation; a third on, National need of salvation.
8. Request careful review of preceding lessons.

For Further Research

Christ in the Modern World, Ch. II, D. S. Cairns.
Christian Doctrine, Ch. VIII, R. W. Dale.
The Diviner Immanence, Ch. XIII, Francis J. McConnell.
What Shall I Believe?, Ch. III, A. H. Strong.
Reading day by day: Gen. 1:26-31; Gen. 2; Gen. 3:1-19; Ps. 139:13-16, Lk. 3:38; I Jn. 3:1-2; I Cor. 9:25-27; II Cor. 12:9-10.

VIII

SALVATION

AT the close of the genealogy of Jesus in the third chapter of Luke's Gospel, we read—"Adam, the son of God." This confirms in a striking manner the more intimate relation between man and his Maker, surpassing by infinite measures the relation of the rest of creation to God. It was the gracious plan of the heavenly Father that all human beings should be children of His household. The break that took place by man's disobedience was due to a denial on man's part of that divine fatherhood and of his own kinship to God. Sin involved a surrendering of human childhood. That this terrible break is not lost sight of by Jesus Himself, comes out most touchingly in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Falling down before his father in penitence, the son sobbed out, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He had intended to say more; but the father did not let him. That confession was sufficient to prove a right state of heart. The son sensed the fact that by his sins the relations of father and child had been broken.

Then the father was ready to say, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," thus declaring his son restored into the family. But thousands and ten thousands to this day, who have sinned and sinned again, without repentance, continue to call themselves the children of the heavenly Father.

The Saving Act of Christ

Salvation consists of the restoring to man of the childlike relationship with the heavenly Father; it is a reconciliation. The Son of God became man in order that man might again be a child of God. The name that was given Christ by Isaiah (Ch. 9:7), more than eight hundred years before the Saviour's birth, "The everlasting Father," may sound a bit strange to us; but it was not meaningless. Jesus Christ started a new human race (I Cor. 15:45, 47), grafted into Himself (Rom. 11:16-24) and thus composing the ever-growing family of God. We are rightly called Christians, because we are Christ's. In Him we are the children of God. (Jn. 3:1, 2.)

How Did Christ Save?

Inasmuch as divine childhood is contingent upon faith in Christ, we naturally ask how it became again possible after the break by sin. Let us look for the answer in the life as well as in the death of our Redeemer.

The life of Christ was lived in absolute obedience to the will of God. Never for one moment did the man Jesus deviate one iota from the Father's plan for the world's salvation; not even when obedience involved the agonies of Gethsemane and of the cross. Jesus Christ fulfilled the whole law. He did this representatively for the human race. In Him, our life grafted into His life, and thus we living with Him the new life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1), are we with Him and through Him fulfilling the Father's will. In Him we are without sin (Jn. 3:6).

But the perfect life of Jesus Christ was by itself not sufficient. It would have served as an example for us to follow; but we could not have followed all the way; Christ would have stood before us as an ideal that could never be reached. To make possible this ingrafting of our lives into His, it was needful that our Lord should enter the portals of death.

This fearful experience the Son of man had not deserved. Not on account of any wrong that He had ever committed, or any right that He had ever failed to do, did Jesus die upon the cross. There was no shadow or trace of sin in Him (Heb. 4:15; Jn. 8:46.) Jesus died on Calvary for your sake and mine. He gave His life, as He had lived His life, in a representative way. When Jesus suffered the punishment of human guilt, the whole race of men, past, present and yet to be, was represented

by the Son of man. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

This wonderful fact has been made a cause of abuse by some, whose hearts are not right with God. They pretend that since the burden of our sins was laid upon the Lamb of God anyway, they need not care about things they say and do. If Jesus is their substitute, their vicarious sacrifice, they are all right. Their sins have already been washed away before they ever commit them; they are pure before God, however unclean their lives. To such monstrous reasoning may sinful minds descend.

In many instances this doctrine has appeared in somewhat different form. The flagrant practices of Tetzel, who sold indulgences to gullible folks, that would free them from sins they were still planning to commit, aroused the heart of Martin Luther until he could no longer keep silent. Through all ages people have been willing to sacrifice substitutes for themselves in form of animals or money, or even other human beings. The ancient Hebrew, taught so clearly in his laws to bring an animal as an offering for his sins, almost incessantly forgot that the offering must be presented as his representative; not as a substitute to which his sins could be transferred. The Hebrew worshiper was originally taught that he was personally guilty, and that the bringing of an ani-

mal was a living confession of guilt on his part. The life blood, which the priest caused to flow out upon the altar, signified the sinner's life, which belongs to God. It was this true confession of the repentant heart which God accepted; for, of course, the blood of bulls and goats could not eliminate sin (Heb. 9:12). "Here is my life, O God," the worshiper should have said either audibly or in his heart, "which I pledge to Thee anew, and this animal serves as the token of my pledge."

Instead of this humble presentation, many a Hebrew gave his animal with pride of heart, as if it should satisfy the Lord; then held his own life back from service and humble worship. It was the falsest form of worship ever invented. God said (Isa. 1:11), "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts." And this is just as false a teaching regarding the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, if that sublime sacrifice is prostituted into a salve for the conscience to indulge in sin. Is it any wonder Robert Burns looked on at such hypocritical doings till the wild cry rose from his heart:

"God knows I'm no the thing I should be;
Nor am I e'en the thing I could be;
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under Gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen."

It is the plan of God that we shall follow Christ all the way, taking up our cross after Him (Matt. 16:24). As living sacrifices, not to earn salvation, but to express our gratitude for His great mercy (Rom. 12:1), we must climb Golgotha with Him that we may also rise with Him in newness of life. (Col. 3:1.)

Repentance

There is no salvation offered anywhere in the Gospels without the summons to repentance. In the Old Testament the prophets insisted on this condition; in the New Testament John the Baptist preached it faithfully, and Jesus took up the same slogan, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." There must be sorrow for sin, shall forgiveness be granted, and nothing in earth or heaven, not even Christ Himself can take the place of that personal regret. There is no rigid rule by which the length or the depth of repentance may be measured. But that it must be felt within the heart, of this there can be no reasonable doubt. For a loving Father has been deeply grieved by our sins. As soon, therefore, as there is any response in our hearts to the loving ways of our Father, it becomes a grief to us that we have been the cause of His displeasure. Our repentance is in itself the first token of reestablished childhood. Lack of repentance is equally a token of continued estrangement from God.

Sorrow for sin brings in its wake a purpose to new obedience. Disloyalty is changed to loyalty. There comes also a consciousness of sins forgiven that brings gladness to the heart. The joy of God over one sinner that repents, finds reflection in the joyousness of that young Christian.

Faith in Christ

The need of faith is universally recognized; but it does not always mean faith in Christ. It may mean faith in self. New Thought, Christian Science, the Coué school, with its, "Every day in every way I am growing better and better" slogan, teaches faith in self. Each person, then, must lay hold on the forces inherent in the universe and bring them into his own service. Whatever divinity exists in this world, even if it be God Himself, these teachers would not hesitate to employ for their own uses. It is this employment of universal energy that lends value to man, according to these teachers.

"From the tips of his toes to the point of his chin
A man's worth four dollars a day,
Whether driving a street-car or digging a well,
Or out on the farm making hay.
But from the chin up the limit is off,
For providing the mind is controlled,
The man with the mind is the king of mankind
And he rules with a scepter of gold."

The Christian's faith is not centered in himself, but in Christ. He is weak but Christ is mighty.

He knows that in his own veins there flows much yellow blood. He prays, "Lead us not into temptation." He finds within himself tendencies cropping out that would wean him away from God. He is not at all pleased with himself. In fact, his attitude is exactly what the people of the world vociferously tell him it ought not to be; he lacks self-confidence.

Paradoxical as it may appear, the Christian is nevertheless no weakling. He is an ardent fighter against sin within himself and of evil in his environment. He is a loyal protector of the innocent; an encourager of honest effort; a leader in benevolences; an explorer into dark and needy regions to bring light there; a builder of the kingdom of God. The Christian is fearless; he will break rather than bow to the forces of evil. He is a giant in moral and spiritual enterprises. He has marked initiative. He is feared by the powers of darkness. All this in the face of his self-confessed weakness; for his favorite saying is, "When I am weak, then am I strong." What is his secret?

The Christian's only secret is his faith in Jesus Christ. The power of the Son of God flows into the child of God. Without Him Whom he believes, he can do nothing; but he can do all things through Christ, which strengthens him. He believes that Christ made good for him all the way, fulfilling all righteousness. He believes that

Christ in His terrible struggles against the powers of evil came off victorious, and that he, too, will by the help of Christ win ultimate victory. He is persuaded that nothing is too good for a child of God, and nothing too hard. He believes that he is an heir with Christ of the kingdom which shall have no end. He believes that whether in the body or out of the body he is the Lord's. And on this sure faith he acts. He not only trusts in Christ; he works for Christ; he works with Christ. He is hid with Christ in God; Christ is his all and in all. Whether he lives or dies does not make a great difference; for in any event he is the Lord's. This dependence not on self, but on the Almighty Christ, is the secret of his strength and the motive of his activities.

Justification

This faith in Christ by which the Christian is completely identified with his Saviour, is his justification. No matter what sins he has committed, and if he were the blackest criminal on earth, if he has with sorrow for his sins turned to Jesus Christ, and trusting in his Redeemer has forsaken his sin, then his sins have been forgiven him. In the sight of God he is now justified and stands with a better record than the most decent citizen of our commonwealth, who trusts in his own righteousness and therefore feels no need of Christ. Hand in hand with the Christ, Who once for all

suffered on his behalf, this erstwhile sinner can stand at the bar of divine justice with sublime confidence.

It goes without saying that if his love for Christ is strong enough, so that he rests upon Him alone for salvation, his fear of sinning again will be strong, too, and he will henceforth regard evil tendencies within him, and sinful allurements without him as his most terrible enemies. The justified sinner prays daily, " Lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil." He will not play with fire; nor does he dare tempt God. He rather fights to the bitter end those yellow streaks within him and will not allow them to control him again. Instead, he " keeps under his body." With all the strength available to him in Christ Jesus, as he is able to retain hold on that inflowing power, he tries to be actually and personally the just man he is by the representative service of Christ. Eventually, therefore, his justification is no longer purely a matter of standing behind Christ; but a living and working as a member of Christ's personality. " There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit " (Rom. 8:1). With this divine interpretation of our relationship with Christ, all the Scriptures agree.

This wonderful teaching should serve to set straight two popular misconceptions.

a. Many good people have been taught that

Jesus lived so perfectly, there were enough good works performed by Him to make up for the shortcomings of all the rest. These superabundant graces, they think, were put to our account and may under certain conditions be appropriated by us. Usually, the Church is supposed to be a depository of these graces and through the channels of the Church they may be secured for our benefit. This error led to the indulgences which we mentioned above, which men could purchase to free them from sin. The same error still holds members of the Roman Church under bondage to the priesthood, which claims the power of dispensing the abundant graces of Christ.

With this teaching for a background, it was no far step to the doctrine that pious saints, also, have laid up a superabundance of good works from which storehouse the less pious may draw,—for a consideration. But Jesus teaches that even if we had done everything required, we would still lack a superabundance of good works (Lk. 17:10).

b. Many people of Christian training are laboring under the impression that heaven can be earned by our good works; that salvation is through character. This teaching does not take into account the great debts incurred at some time or another during a lifetime; nor does it consider the need of new life in Christ Jesus. The only way according to the Gospel is Christ. There is no other. (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

Sanctification

As there is physical growth in every normal childhood, so there is spiritual growth on the part of the children of God; presuming, they, too, are normal. This process of growth is not frequently mentioned, because to our shame most of us have to confess that our growth is anything but rapid; but the classic name for it is sanctification. This literally means, growing more holy. So far as it can be made a subject of our studies there may be discerned seven lines of increase.

1. An increase in the knowledge of God and of the things that concern the Kingdom. A prayerful study of the Bible, of the story of the Christian Church, including Missions, of the needs of the local church, of the needs of community and nation and on into the whole world; the reading of church papers and of helpful books,—in short a familiarizing with vital facts relative to God's gracious activities in the world, helps supremely to bring about this increase in knowledge.

2. An increase of mastery over sin. After we have been renewed in Christ we find within us still the same old tendencies that ruled us in previous days. The very nerve-tracks in our bodies were effected by repeated acts of sin; whether in thought or in deed. In that way evil habits were first formed. Paul calls these sinful inclinations, "The old man." But as the Christian walks with his Lord and learns to put into action the revealed

will of God, the power of these evil tendencies decreases, and the power to fulfill the mind of God increases. The old man dies and the new man grows.

3. An increase of fellowship with Christ in the Holy Spirit. The little child in the home grows gradually better acquainted with his father and learns to confide in him ever more readily, unless outside influences interfere. Between the child of God and his Father the same experience may be witnessed. A Christian learns to talk things over with God, to look to Him for advice, to listen for divine encouragement. His view-point gradually becomes that of heaven instead of the earth. He learns to judge the affairs of life as they are related to God.

4. An increase of service in the kingdom of God. Such increased service involves,

a. A better knowledge of self, with a greater appreciation of others.

b. A greater willingness to do the inconspicuous things, for which small thanks are rendered and little honor is awarded.

c. A gain of skill in the understanding and teaching of the Word of God for the comforting of those in distress, the enlightening of those who search for truth, the convicting of those who walk in error, the planning for kingdom extension, and the congenial working together with others.

5. An increase of longing for true holiness. The undeceived Christian does not pronounce himself holy, except representatively in Christ. Paul points himself out as "the chief of sinners." He witnesses to his own progress in holiness, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12, 14.)

6. An increase of gratitude for divine grace and help. This steady increase leads on to the state in glory where praise and thanksgiving shall form the keynotes of worship and service.

7. An increase in likeness with Christ. As the final of God's creation man was made in the likeness of God. This likeness has been greatly marred by sin; but becomes renewed when the heart definitely turns Godward. Through all the eternities the likeness of God's children to the Son of God will continue to increase. But inasmuch as Christ is infinite, complete equality can never be reached.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Pray the Lord's Prayer, one person leading audibly, the others follow silently. Start a quiet discussion regarding those who may truly pray that prayer. There are various opinions on this; so that the leader should not be content with the opinions of one or two.

2. Consider the representative character of Jesus Christ, and compare with this subversions of the substitution theory

3. Relate signs of repentance as personally experienced and as witnessed in others. Discuss certain modern Revival Meetings at which repentance seems to be uncalled for.

4. Make clear to every one the meaning of faith in Christ. Have expressions from many on the subject. Call up the slogan of the Reformation, "The just shall live by faith," and apply to this lesson.

5. Have the members name requisites of soul-growth, and suggestions of means for such growth. Consider hindrances.

6. Let the papers be read that were assigned for this period and enter on full discussion as time permits.

7. Ask members of the class to think, while preparing for the next period, what are the outstanding reasons for the existence of their particular denomination.

8. Review as thoroughly as seems feasible all previous work.

For Further Research

The Fact of Christ, Ch. V, P. Carnegie Simpson.

What Shall I Believe?, Ch. VI, A. H. Strong.

The Christ We Forget, Ch. XXXV-XLI, Whitwell Wilson.

Popular Lectures on Popular Themes, A. A. Hodge.

Reading day by day: Ezek. 18:1-24; Hos. 14; Isa. 1:11-18; Heb. 10:1-10; Jn. 3:14-17; Rom. 6:1-9; Ps. 8.

IX

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

IT may naturally be expected, when spiritual childhood of God has been restored, that the noblest human qualities shall find fullest expression. This natural expectation is realized in the matter of every Christian virtue, and particularly in the expression of the social tendencies. "They that loved the Lord spake often one to another." There have always been blessed experiences of which the children of God want to talk to each other. There have been hopes and fears which they desire to share. There are plans they must work out jointly, shall success be gained. Similar interests unite them. God is their one center of worship; their one Father. How perfectly natural that through the ages and to this day the children of God have gathered for worship!

It looks as if as early as the days of Enos (Gen. 4:26), previous to the flood, believers came together in groups for prayer. We know that Abraham taught his household the worship and service of God (Gen. 18:19). Under the leadership of Moses more than a million people acknowledged Jehovah as their Lord; so that Stephen (Acts 7:38) could speak of "The Church in the wilder-

ness." Too frequently the Hebrews wandered away from God, and never did the whole nation without exception worship the Lord in spirit and in truth; but through all backslidings "a remnant" always remained faithful. When Elijah was sorely vexed, surmising that he alone had remained loyal to Jehovah, he learned of seven thousand others, who never did bow the knee to Baal. This remarkable fact has remained true in all centuries, even during the darkest days of the Dark Ages. In some form the Church has existed from the beginning and it will continue to the end.

Of Whom is the Church Composed?

Among the Hebrews one might have spoken of the people of God with one of two meanings. He might have meant the whole nation that called themselves after Abraham; or he might have meant those who were in every way loyal to Jehovah. Among those who came to tabernacle or temple for worship, he might still have found occasion to think of two great groups. One group came to have a sort of vacation; when they might enjoy uninterrupted converse with friends and relatives, be free from manual labor, feast on music and processions, and be away from the humdrum of customary existence. There was also that other group whose heart yearned for the courts of the Lord; whose delight it was to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; who cared for no better

meat and drink than the teachings of Israel's sages. Not in every instance would it have been possible, however, to draw the line between these two groups; for many came with mixed motives. Only He Who knows the innermost thoughts of men could distinguish between the wheat and the chaff.

It has been thus through the ages. When the word " Church " is employed, it usually means an organization composed of officers and members, teachers and disciples who have agreed upon certain articles of common faith, have pledged obedience to certain rules, and are united for the working out of a certain program. But in the minds of those who like to look a bit further, this organization will not answer. They may be thinking of a purely spiritual group, who are united by no organization of any kind, but who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. They may in their thoughts even group those, who no longer live on earth, but have died in the Lord, to this great body, and call it, " The Invisible Church," in distinction from " The Visible Church." A few people have fallen into the habit of calling the building in which worshipers meet " The Church." For this designation there is no excuse except wrong habits. It is quite proper, however, to give the name " church " to a single congregation. On the other hand, it is presumptuous to apply the name " The Church " to any one of the many denominations of which the visible church of Christ

is composed. To clarify our minds and to agree on our vocabulary we may have these definitions.

1. The great company of those who believe in Christ as their Saviour, no matter in what country or of what denomination, may be called "The Church." When a distinction is made between those on earth and those in heaven, the former are called "The Church Militant," and the latter "The Church Triumphant."

2. Those of one creed and one form of government under one official name, usually known as one denomination, may be called "Church." In this way we think of the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and every other denomination.

3. A single group of worshipers, belonging to a denomination, but located in one particular vicinity, and having vital affiliations with the larger body, may be called a "Church." In this way there may be "The First Congregational Church," or "The Bethany Baptist Church," or any one local church. The person who belongs to one of these local churches belongs equally to the great denomination or Church of which his local church forms part.

4. The complete group of denominations and sects that confess Jesus Christ in all the world, each forming their own organization, but all standing for the same great principles of redemption in Christ, evangelism for Christ, and instruction in

the love and service of Christ, may be called " The Church." This accumulation or aggregation of Churches, though it doubtless contains individuals who do not from the heart worship the Lord, nor truly serve Him, is the greatest force of God's kingdom, and of this body we should think in this chapter.

The Purpose of the Church

The reason why the children of God gather in worship is not merely that they may give expression in a spiritual way to their social tendencies; but much more that they may jointly work out God's program on the earth. The purpose of God in establishing and sustaining His Church may find partial expression in,

1. The formation of a family of God's children that shall in a measure typify the family of God in heaven. They are brothers and sisters together, united by bonds that are stronger than death, and truer than blood. The Eldest Son in this household is Jesus Christ.

2. As they worship the Lord in unison they experience a strength which is not felt so vividly when one bows the knee to the Father in solitude. " Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them," said Jesus. These common followers of Jesus are able also through such fellowship to admonish and encourage one another.

3. Disciples, as their name implies, are learners. They need instruction. Jesus first preached; then taught. Paul carried out this same program of Jesus. In the hour of worship the children of God may mutually instruct each other. Supremely, they are in their joint sessions to be instructed of God.

4. Equalization of worshipers. Before our heavenly Father there is no distinction of rank; we are without exception "poor and needy"; so that divine grace must be applied to every one of us. From whatever condition of life we come to church, we are children of the same household; we are brothers and sisters. The church is democratic. The custom, therefore, of seatings within the church building that set apart the wealthy from the poor, is wholly contrary to the genius of church life. This sense of equality before God should be most truly felt at the time of Communion Service, when the emblems of divine love are visible before all worshipers.

5. There is a purpose in our joint worship that goes beyond the worshipers themselves. Never must the children of God forget that there are others, who have not yet come back to the Father. Every true church is organized for the purpose of extension. This extension is made possible in two ways during the process of joint worship:

a. Outsiders, to whom the worship of God is not an ingrained habit of life, should be

repeatedly invited to witness the season of worship, so that they may feel a discontent in their own hearts, which may drive them to the throne of grace. If the place of worship is such that attendance of outsiders is unlikely, the church must go out of its building at suitable times and conduct its services in the open, so that there may yet be witnesses whose hearts can be touched.

b. Worshipers should definitely plan to bring the Gospel to every place where it has not reached. The Church is essentially missionary; it is built on the extension plan. The knowledge, the worship, and the service of Christ is to spread till His dominion shall stretch " from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth."

Should a Christian Belong to a Church?

The things we have mentioned in the previous paragraphs cannot be done so well singly; they require the united efforts of God's children; either as a local group or as a national body. Christians who keep themselves aloof from the group and its God-given tasks are liable to serious errors.

1. They fail to enrich others through the testimony of their own experience, and the help they may render in sorrow, perplexity and joy. On the part of the church this means that opportunity should be afforded her humblest members to exert these Christian graces.

2. They fail to gather into their own lives the blessings that flow out from the lives of other Christians, and for the outflowing of which those others would be none the poorer.

3. Because of their lack of contact with the group, they are greatly tempted to misjudge the members of that group. Themselves, in their lone position, they may estimate at too low or at too high a rate, but probably, "More highly than they ought to think."

4. They fail to put their shoulders to the wheel with others for progressive kingdom work; so that God's plans are not carried out so fully for their failure. Not seldom it is found that people hold back from the church because it would require their financial aid; they have not learned to think of God as the Owner of all. Again, there are those who shrink from giving time and energy to the work of a local church. They see a world perishing for want of redemptive agencies; but lack the love that is needed to be one of those agencies.

5. They are not only themselves "slackers," but by their example they encourage others to play the slacker. Often these are Bible-reading Christians against whose morals nothing is to be said. But the better people they personally are, the more hurtful will be their example for influencing others against the church.

6. They are false to the program of Jesus, Who gathered about Him one band of twelve, another

of seventy, and yet a larger group of a hundred and fifty, whom He trained in joint service. Our Lord addressed them in the plural and taught them The Lord's Prayer in plural form. He gave His great Commission to them jointly; for only with a united front are they able to carry out His mandates. According to the Master's instructions His followers went everywhere organizing churches, even if the group were so small that they could meet in a home (Rom. 16:5; Philemon 2.)

Why Denominations?

It happens occasionally that someone who has been recently converted, or has gradually dropped out from the gatherings of worshipers, looks for excuses not to unite with a church. Among their pet arguments is the fact of numerous denominations and sects. It does not usually occur to them that herein lies a chief reason for uniting with some church; because so great a number offers so many choices and will suit fastidious tastes. But the fact of many churches has made others wonder at so much division where there should be unity. Let us consider the reasons:

1. Differences of nationality and ancestry. One naturally expects Scandinavians and Germans to be of the Lutheran faith; Dutch, Ost-Frisians, Huguenots, and Protestant Czecho-Slovaks to be members in Reformed Churches. Regarding the Scotch and Scotch-Irish we feel confident to find

them Presbyterian. Those of English stock are likely to be Episcopalian; while those masses of Southern Europe, among whom the Inquisition did its thorough, hellish work in Reformation days, are now obedient children of the Church of Rome. These groups, even after their arrival in America, were born into their respective denominations.

2. Differences of temperament. The man who relishes to his heart's content a meeting of Salvation Army lads and lassies may not feel at home during a morning service in a Presbyterian church. The Yorkshire miner, although of English stock, cannot keenly enjoy an Episcopal service. The songs, the genuflections, even the trend of doctrine in one denomination, do not persuasively appeal to the type of worshipers that meets in a different group.

3. Differences of task. Each great denomination in carrying on the comprehensive program of Christ is best able to make its impress along certain lines. Warm-hearted, enthusiastic progress has marked the path of Methodists and Disciples; educational evangelism has been the means of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Charity, slum work, social service;—these, too, have received special emphasis on the part of single denominations or sects. Like so many divisions of cavalry, infantry, artillery, and sappers, so the greater and smaller bodies of Evangelical churches

have marched in essential unison with the one purpose of world victory for Christ.

It is the confession of an imperfect church that bickerings have broken out. Each church contains many human members. There has been selfish fear lest one church might gain advantage over another. There have been puerile attempts "to be first." Envy has worked havoc. Intolerance still shows its ugly face and works its brutal jaw. But, thanks be to God, these instances are becoming ever more rare. The leaders of our churches have seen the hurt of it and have set their faces against these evils. In the Foreign Field whole sections of country are assigned to single denominations to labor there without competition. Joint schools are being established under the management of several denominations. Gradually, the same spirit is gaining ground in the homeland. Sectarianism is doomed. But the many different groups of worshipers will continue to afford rich choices to the Christian who earnestly desires to carry out the plan of Christ on earth, as He gave His world-program to the Church.

Divine Grace Through Church Channels

Jesus Christ founded the Christian Church in His own blood. Is it any wonder He deeply loves the Church? God's children are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye; they are graven in the palm of His hand. In the Old Testament the

Church was called the wife, to whom Jehovah was espoused. In the New Testament Jesus calls the Church, His Bride, with Himself as the Bridegroom. Through the channels of this Church much of His grace is manifested.

In well-known instances priestcraft has taken advantage of this teaching and has prostituted the noble purpose of these gracious channels for its own benefit. The Church of Rome declares that none can be saved except through her agencies. Whoever fails to identify himself with that church, to partake of its sacraments, to attend its services, and to contribute to its treasuries, is bound for eternal perdition. But those, who faithfully observe the ceremonies of that church and carry out its mandates to the letter, are sure of heaven. They may live rather loose lives and still play safe, if attendance at mass, confession to the priest, and contribution to the church are regularly observed. According to Rome's teachings, the purpose of their hierarchy is to take care of the spiritual welfare of their adherents. This service on the part of the church does not cease at death, but continues with undiminished vigor, though somewhat in proportion to the liberality of contributions.

To this vicious doctrine the Protestant Reformation was a protest, and against its falseness every well-trained Protestant still protests. We are convinced that neither the Church as such nor its ministry possesses power to save a single soul;

but we do believe that through the Church there flow peculiar graces, because of divine favor upon and through God's children. The channels of these graces are:

1. Christian fellowship and service. Sacred songs; earnest prayer; Scripture reading; meditation on the Word and its application to life as suggested in the sermon; joint-labors with far-away missionaries; the teaching of a class; the leading of a meeting; the telling to others of grace received; the working with others in humility and love, all these experiences do greatly enrich the Christian's life. These same Christian graces are instrumental in bringing others into the Kingdom.

2. The Sacraments that were instituted by Christ, namely, Baptism and The Lord's Supper, are conveyers of rich, spiritual blessings to those who receive them in faith. Of these, Baptism, in whatever form, should be thought of as a token of personal attachment to Christ and of membership in that great Body, the Church, of which He is the Head.

a. Wherever children receive baptism in infancy, there their parents express their faith that their children belong to God, and their readiness to dedicate these children wholly to the Lord. With this surrender, they make the solemn promise that they shall rear their children in the knowledge and love of God. Those who thus dedicate their children in

baptism, but later on fail to train them in the Christian religion, or refuse to let them go into whole-life service, are committing a grievous sin; they are playing false to their sacred pledge. For whatever basis there may be for infant baptism, this is certain that without a certainty of parental training for God, there is no room for the Sacrament at that time.

The rite of infant baptism is not one-sided. Parents have faith that God acknowledges their children as His children. He makes a covenant with parents to be their children's God, as Jehovah covenanted with Abraham and all his descendants in the rite of circumcision. When children reach the years of discernment, it is their sacred privilege to confess their heavenly Father before men.

b. On the part of those who have reached the age in which they may decide for themselves, baptism is the outward token of full allegiance to Jesus Christ. It may rightfully be administered to those only who surrender their lives wholly to the Lord, and accept Him alone for salvation. The water of the sacrament signifies the washing away of sin and the rising in newness of life as children of the Father. God pledges His gracious care over them for time and for eternity.

In every instance, baptism should follow membership in the Invisible Church and should be the

visible avenue toward membership in the Visible Church. For none should consciously unite with a local church without complete surrender to Christ, faith in Him as the Redeemer from sin, and purpose to live with and for Him. Those who unite with the church under the impulse of any other motive are "thieves and robbers" (Jn. 10:7-10).

The only other Sacrament inaugurated by Christ is The Lord's Supper. It serves to commemorate the sacrificial death of Christ for us. In partaking of The Lord's Supper the bread signifies His broken body, and the wine represents His blood poured out for us. The sacred Supper, therefore, serves as an object lesson that reminds Christians of Christ through their senses of sight, touch, and taste. But it means more than that. Jesus, who said, "I am with you, even to the end of the age," is present at this Supper as the real Host. His brothers and sisters are at the table with Him. His loving presence imparts courage by the way. There is ample testimony to the real strength that has flown into the lives of Christians at this sacred occasion. There is also a looking forward at this table; for Jesus said, we should remember His death, till He come.

The Duties of Church Members

As it is the duty of every human being to serve God loyally, because He gave us life, and all that

we have; and as it is the duty of every Christian to unite with the church, because it is the body of Christ, so it is the duty of every church member to take his part in the building up of the kingdom of God; because this is the divinely ordained labor enjoined upon the body of Christ. There are innumerable ways of carrying on this divine program; but most of them may be suggested.

1. A personal life of communion with God.

2. Regular participation in worship with God's people; first at home, then in groups of a semi-public and of a public nature.

3. Proportionate and liberal giving for local, national and world work of the kingdom.

4. Service in the home church with all its departments.

5. Sharing with others in Christian enterprises not immediately under the auspices of the church or denomination.

6. Living daily in full agreement with the Christian profession.

7. Striving constantly toward perfection in Christian character and service; yet willing to follow God's leading even where these duties can be carried out only in part.

The Church Member's True Position

The Church is "The body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5), and Christ is the Head of this body (Eph. 4:15,

16). The Church also is the Bride (Rev. 21:2; 22:17), with Christ as the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29; Matt. 9:5). Ever cleansing the Church from sin and sanctifying it to Himself, the Bridegroom is preparing "A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). All this seems too much to be said of us; but it is true of us while we abide in Christ.

Again, we are called, "A royal priesthood" (I Pt. 2:9), offering ourselves and showing forth His praise, as Christ once offered Himself for us (Rom. 12:1).

Other names are given us. We are called "The salt of the earth," "The light of the world," just as Jesus claimed that title for Himself. "Witnesses," too, is a name applied to us in view of the work we are to do. All of which points to our Lord's expectations of us, which we should never disappoint. In His high-priestly prayer, He said to our Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:1).

The Christian is or must be the Christ-man. The divine Redeemer represented us in His life and death, and still makes intercession for us in heaven. We represent Christ on the earth.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Ask the class to picture Christ as the Pastor of their own local church. If He insisted on the accept-

ance of His principles by all the members, how long would He be welcome there? Should He, then, accommodate Himself to that church, or should that church accommodate itself to Him? Let this be discussed thoroughly, regardless of consequences.

2. Compare the helpfulness of private and public devotions.

3. Take up reasons given by non-churchmembers for not uniting with a church, and conduct a sympathetic discussion of them.

4. Allow one representative from each denomination present to suggest one function in which his church stands prominent.

5. See that the value of the church is brought out in all its phases at home and abroad.

6. The leader should be extremely careful in the discussion of Baptism, lest any be offended. Opportunity may be given, however, to question the presentation of it in the lesson. The meaning of the Lord's Supper should be more fully discussed.

7. The work most liked in the church, and the work most dreaded, may be stated by members, with apparent reasons.

8. Let ten members prepare for next lesson a brief written laudation of one Christian virtue, before reading of it in the lesson.

For Further Research

The True Church, Ch. I, XII, A. M. Dulles.

The Church We Forget, Ch. I, XVIII, XXV, P. Whitwell Wilson.

The Future of the Churches, Ch. I, III, V, Roger W. Babson.

The Diviner Immanence, Ch. XII, Francis J. McConnell.

Reading day by day: Ps. 24; Mal. 3:16, 17; Acts 15:1-11; Acts 2:41-47; Heb. 10:19-25; 1 Cor. 16:1-14; Rev. 1:4-20.

X

THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

THE Christian religion and the Christian life are one; they cannot be separated into compartments. For it is the genius of the Christian religion to touch and vitalize the entire human being; at the same time to demand complete loyalty. One who truly worships God, must serve Him as truly. So fully are worship and service identified that we habitually speak of joint worship as a "Service." It should become equally habitual to call the living out of God's will "Worship."

Throughout the ages attempts have been made to separate religion from life. Such attempts have invariably succeeded to the degree in which the religion concerned was lifeless. It is possible for an idolater to lay his gift on the altar, then to go out in pursuit of greedy or lustful purposes. It is not difficult, also, for the devotee of ceremonies and liturgies to participate in a form of worship which seems to identify him with Christianity; then to serve the devil with all his heart. But these performances are not expressive of the Christian religion; they are only caricatures and imitations of it. Jesus gave voice to the feelings of

prophets and apostles in all ages, when He insisted, "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

The Knowledge of God Alive

The knowledge of God and Christian life are one. Just about to enter the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus lifted up His face toward heaven and prayed that matchless prayer of John Seventeen, in which He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." That such a knowledge of God is not purely intellectual, should go without saying. It means intimate acquaintance and friendship with God. As Enoch walked with God and one day drew so near the heavenly places that he just stepped in; as Abraham sat with God under the oak-tree of Mamre; as John the Beloved rested on the bosom of Jesus; so are we to gain a knowledge of God that means life. Some great theologian may write wonderful theses on the attributes of God, and may talk glibly or profoundly of the relationships of Creator and creation: yet be far away from God in his heart. Or the ritualist may indulge in numerous prayers that once served to express a soul's longings for the heavenly Father; yet himself fail of intimate friendship with God.

"'Tis not the broad phylactory
Or stated prayers
That make us saints;
We judge the tree
By what it bears.
And when a man can live apart
From faith on theologic trust,
We know, the blood around his heart
Is dry as dust."

The Knowledge of God's Word Experimental

A true knowledge of God's Word and Christian life are one. For the Bible is expressive of human experience in the presence of God. Men lived with God in the center of their existence; then told of the meaning of such a life. The Bible is the Book of Life, because it was first lived, then written. It is not possible, therefore, to understand this Book without first living it. It is told of a Korean convert who tried to memorize the Beatitudes; but try as he might, he could not master the sentence, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." For days and weeks he labored on that one sentence; but in vain. One early morning he came to the Missionary, his face aglow. Without a stammer he recited the whole Beatitude. Then he explained how he had during all that time of struggle been unable to show mercy toward a neighbor who had grievously hurt him. At last he had found sufficient grace to show mercy. It enabled him to master the sentence. Unfortunately, this incident is not typical to the

letter; for many are able to master passages of Scripture, which they fail to live. But it is typical of the spirit of knowing God's Word. Only that part of the Bible which we put into practice do we really know.

The Purpose of Christian Teaching is Christian Living

The first purpose of God's talking to men was to teach them the ways of health. Prevention is better than cure. Had man been willing to listen to the suggestions God gave him, the teaching of God would have become richer and deeper, and the Son of God would, we believe, have come on earth permanently to be man's companion. The commandments of God are laws of health. "O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48:12). For this reason God's Word is called a lamp for our feet and a light on our pathway. In our activities we are to put into practice the counsel we have received of God. As Jesus put it, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn. 13:17). After Paul has for eleven long chapters in the Epistle to the Romans been discussing great theological subjects regarding which the churches to this day are not fully agreed, he wrote that wonderful twelfth chapter, on Christian conduct, and on which we are all

without exception or murmur agreed. That great man felt, as every true worshiper of God feels with him, that the teaching of God's truth is useless if it does not result in a godly life.

Leading Christian Virtues

To different people different virtues make their strong appeal, according to experiences through which people have passed. To one who has repeatedly suffered on account of spells of anger, either within himself or in others, amiability will appear as a cardinal virtue. To another, who has been troubled by small dealings in money matters, liberality may stand out supreme. To a third whom pessimism in some form assails, the virtue of courage, or faith looks big. Just as every person who looks at the colorings of a rainbow sees different hues, because he stands looking from a different angle, so those who would enumerate and standardize various virtues, are sure to have views of their own. It is only in a suggestive way, therefore, that we present to the student's consideration the ten outstanding Christian virtues of reverence, humility, trust, faith, hope, courage, liberality, sincerity, purity, and love.

Reverence

The first distinctive Christian virtue is reverence; which marks a man's right attitude toward God. It is our Saviour's first concern in the great prayer He taught us, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

For without a hallowing of the name of God there can be no true prayer. Irreverence is a sin that immediately shuts away God from the soul. It cannot be put on from the outside; for it is an inner feeling of God's majesty, and His goodness, with a desire that these divine attributes may in a measure come to dwell also within us.

Not seldom a contemplation of the works of God in nature leads to a reverent attitude,—the majestic sweep of a mountain-range, the boundless expanse of the ocean; the countless numbers of stars and planets. "The undevout astronomer is mad." The delicate traceries of leaves and flowers, the crystal formations of snowflakes, the intricate arteries of animal life, produce similar feelings. Agassiz, the famouus biologist, would put the scale of a fish under his microscope, gaze at it intensely for many minutes, then look up to God with a prayer of praise on his lips for the marvel of its beauty. But the contemplation of God's ways may go beyond the things we now see; they may go back into history, into our own lives, and into the lives and sayings of just men now perfect. Supremely, the life and death of Christ provoke within us a sense of awe that induces worship.

The reverent person will not lightly use the name of God in any of its forms, or even the names of natural powers through which the greatness of our heavenly Father receives manifestation, such as the thunder of the clouds; the place

of God's peculiar abode, or heaven, and the place of condemnation, or hell.

To insure reverence, body and soul must co-operate. An irreverent position suggests irreverent feelings. Eyes open, legs crossed, hands on the seat behind, gum in the mouth, any such modes of behavior militate against true reverence.

Reverence toward God will naturally produce reverence toward God's children, and in a measure toward all human beings, for they were made in the likeness of God. If reverence is required in the House of God that has been built with walls of stone or wood; much more is reverence required for this temple of the body, in which God is willing to dwell.

Humility

Hand-in-hand with reverence is the virtue of humility; which is first felt in the presence of God. He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift; through Him we are what we are and have whatever we possess. In His presence, therefore, we have no reason to boast. The Christian is humble before God.

But humility in the presence of God does not suffice for our Christian virtue; we need to be humble, also, in the presence of our fellow-men. Pride, which is the opposite of humility, vitiates and neutralizes every other virtue; while humility redeems an otherwise weak individual from the

worst of his foibles. There is a sense in which the most serious troubles in a Christian community are due to the pride of certain of its members. They want preeminence. Except in a position of honor they will not serve. Having secured an honorable office, they refuse to step out without creating a scene. Placed second by inevitable circumstances they sulk like Achilles in his tent, or even leave the church. There is nothing in a local church that so wrinkles the pastor's face and whitens his hairs as this unchristian lack of humility.

Lack of humility was the bane of Jesus' training of the Twelve. While He was setting His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem, on that last journey, they were daily bickering among themselves who should be the greatest. He set a little child among them; but they failed to catch His meaning. Then on that final evening in the Upper Room, the Master took a towel and basin and washed the disciples' feet. Next to the cross it was His last and greatest lesson, to teach humility. When Paul finds this same virtue lacking among the church-members at Philippi, he points them again to Jesus, who, when enjoying equality with God, was willing to let that honor go, that humanity might be lifted (Phil. 2:5-11).

Humility is a source of happiness not only for others with whom we are to live and work; but for ourselves. The humble person does not feel

slighted when his name is not published from the housetops; but feels happy when working in an unnoticed corner. He never suffers that pain that comes from a sense of being stepped on. Deserving the pleasure of God, he enjoys that pleasure. In return he affords both God and his fellow-men the gladness of his fellowship.

Trust

Intimately joined with humility is trust. This Christian virtue, too, relates us first with God. "In God we trust," the motto on the American dollar, should be more frequently noted; for it expresses a fundamental truth. Our nation depends upon God, whether as a nation we are aware of it or not. Unless "in God we trust," we are building on false foundations. The essence of religion is this sense of dependence on God. The men and women who have most keenly felt the meaning of God in their lives, have voiced our sentiments in such sayings as "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"; "The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms"; "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not on thine own understanding"; "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Our great hymns are in the same strain, "A mighty fortress is our God"; "Rock of Ages, cleft for me"; "Jesus, Lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly." In less poetic strain, but

with no less feeling of dependence, Paul exclaims, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," and again, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

1. Christian trust is, as already noted, first in God. It is merged into reverence when, with John Ruskin, we confide in God on the smallest affairs of life. The trustful heart can see the hand of a heavenly Father in everything, and is glad that the Supreme Ruler is not only almighty, but also all-wise and all-good. For this reason the trusting Christian worries no more than Jesus did, Who looked on the lilies and the sparrows, and saw the gracious ways of Providence for Himself. But trust in God is not weakness. The soldiers of Gustaf Adolph of Sweden sang the great Psalms of David on entering the field of battle; so did the Ironsides of Cromwell. But they made terrible fighters. Their trust in God gave them strength for victory; a strength which is still at the disposal of God's trusting children.

2. Christian trust needs to extend to fellow Christians, so long as they, too, have their trust centered in God. "Put not your trust in princes" (Ps. 146:3), remains forever true. But it is the plan of God that His children shall trust Him jointly as well as individually. For the work of the Lord must be done for the most part jointly. A good Christian trusts the Church and its work, so long as this is in line with God's re-

vealed will. He trusts his fellow-workers to do their share of the kingdom's service. He does not consider himself another Atlas on whose shoulders the whole world's burdens must be carried. He shares the bearing of burdens with others. His confidence in God does not decrease, but does increase his confidence in those who with him trust in God. Looking into the future he will not pine, fearing that when his own hand shall slip from the helm, the ship must needs be wrecked. His trust in God extends beyond himself into the world. His trust grows into faith.

Faith

We have already seen how one virtue grows out of another and accompanies that other. The Christian who trusts, finds faith establishing itself in his heart. But faith and trust, though close akin, are not identical. There is more mental energy in faith. Imagination takes a larger part. If trust is a virtue of the child of God, faith is the virtue of the man of God. One trusts in the dark, knowing that God is light and already sees all things. One has faith in the light, on the heights, where things can be seen in conjunction and as one great whole. Trust takes hold of the hands of God; faith looks out with the sight of God.

It should be clear from this that faith is not blind. Were it blind, it would be superstition. Faith has its basis in knowledge and is guided by

wisdom. *Credo, ut intelligam,* said the philosophers of the Middle Ages, that is, "I believe, in order that I may *know*." To which idiom there is some truth; for frequently we must first walk by faith and then go on by sight. But turn this idiom around and it applies still better, "I know, that I may believe." When we know the will of God, and are assured of His supreme sovereignty in the universe, then we are able to go on with faith. For we know that God sees the end from the beginning and that His purposes are ultimately reached, as the waters of the river ultimately reach the sea. Knowledge is, therefore, projected by means of faith. Knowing the nature of God in a measure, we thereby know the future in a measure. We have hold of the right premises; hence we can draw right inferences and conclusions. The Missionary, who goes to a people who have never heard of Christ, does not know whether he will personally see those people in mass turning toward their Redeemer; but he does know that in the end heathenism must pass away and Christianity become victorious.

It is largely because of this basis of faith, in things assuredly known, that creeds can be formulated. There are certain outstanding principles in the Christian's mind, which require no more new searching; they have proved true. Such outstanding truths as God's love for us; our need of God; Christ's sacrifice for us; our debt to Him, and

others which in previous chapters we have studied, these have become self-evident to us. They form part of our faith; they are our creed. On that faith we are ready to act. It is not too much to say, then, that Christian faith leads to the Christian's faithfulness.

Hope

There is close kinship between faith and hope, as appears in the classic passage (Heb. 11:1), "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It seems customary to think of hope as a somewhat weaker virtue than faith. The words "I hope so," do not carry great conviction. Nevertheless, this Christian virtue is in every way as significant as any of those we have mentioned. To sense the greatness of it, try to drop it out. Eliminate hope and see what is left. Picture David Livingstone in the heart of Africa without hope. Imagine Peary laboring his way toward the North Pole, hopeless. Without enduring hope those heroes could never have reached their objective. Sickness would have gripped them; discouragement would have laid them low. For the opposite of hope is despair. Hope puts springs in one's steps; hope rejuvenates; hope sustains effort. Hope keeps this old earth of ours active and in order. A hopeless world would spell chaos.

The Christian needs hope, because faith is so

frequently put to shame. Jerry McAuley, in his Water Street Mission, New York City, saw his faith deceived many a time by the bums he tried to raise up; but his hope could not be deceived. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

The Christian's hope rests, with every other virtue, first in God. Were it not for God, there would be no chance for hope. But in face of every disappointment his hope in God is not shaken. The things for which he hopes have their basis in his faith; which means that his hopes are rooted in God. His faith is workable, because he hopes. He links earth with heaven through hope. There is not the certainty in his hope which there is in his faith; but that very uncertainty means more romance and thrill.

"If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars.
Who knows, but in yon smoke concealed,
Our comrades chase e'en now the fliers.
And, but for us, possess the field."

In this spirit the most hopeful Christian is an inspiration to others who have less hold on hope in God.

Courage

Where the virtues already mentioned have their perfect way, there arises a resultant that may be called "Courage." Without those virtues, courage would be out of the question. This does not mean that courage is purely a combination of other virtues; it has a quality of its own. But in

its turn it supplies quality to all other virtues. We might so completely trust God's omnipotence that we ourselves might not lift a finger. Our fathers actually dealt in such a way about Foreign Missions. They trusted that God would do with the heathen as He pleased; so they left those Christless people severely alone, except for monetary exploitation. They had faith in God, too, but failed to offer themselves as instruments in the hands of God. Courage means throwing your own heart into the work.

The stem on which the word courage is built, is cor, or corda, which means heart. To have courage, then, means to be willing to throw one's whole self into a project. The really courageous person considers the accomplishment of a set enterprise worth the price of his life. For this reason Jesus Christ may be regarded the greatest hero, who, as the street-urchin put it, "Died, and didn't have to." The work of the Kingdom of God is waiting for just such courage; the impetus of men and women who throw their lives into the kingdom enterprise. Those who lack that courage display its opposite, which is cowardice. Their hearts are not in it.

Courage is sure to meet with opposition; but this serves to stimulate to more courageous effort. Washington at Valley Forge, Abraham Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address, William the Silent setting himself at the head of an untrained people

against the empire of Spain, Jonathan and his armor-bearer fighting the Philistines, Jesus alone in Pilate's Court, these are illustrious examples of courage. And out of it comes the satisfaction with which Paul expressed his feelings, " I have fought a good fight " (II Tim. 4:7); also the fulfillment of the promise from the lips of the Son of man, " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne " (Rev. 3:21).

Sincerity

The original of the word, sine cere, " without wax," does still reveal its splendid meaning. The Christian ought to be no other than he seems to be. Those leaders of the Jews who laid upon the people burdens which they themselves did not touch, tried to look different from what they were; they were actors. But Jesus saw through them and called them what they were,—actors, or hypocrites. And there were none whose sins our gentle Saviour so thoroughly and consistently despised. Except for genuine repentance, Jesus saw no hope for them. To this day the insincere person is the most difficult to meet, because he twists and thwarts the basic principles of life. There is nothing steady on which to stand with him. He betrays past, present and future. An insincere Christian is a contradiction of terms.

The true Christian is sincere with God. He does not try to hide from God his evil tendencies and

his mistakes; neither his plans and aspirations. All things are open and above-board between him and his Lord. This is the surest basis of sincerity. It is the only reliable basis. The true Christian knows that God's program must be his own program; that God's work is his own work; that his own talents are divine gifts; that God is the owner of all. His life belongs to God. This sincerity makes him a partner with God. The victories of God are his own victories.

The Christian is sincere toward his neighbor. If all the virtues we have considered form part of the Christian's make-up, then he will almost surely be glad to meet with others. But should he not be glad, then he must not pretend. He must be harmless but honest. The Christian never plans ways by which he shall be advantaged to the disadvantage of others; neither will he attempt to make things appear different from what they are. He will not dare accuse any person who is not present to defend himself; for this is playing false, even if the story were true. The Christian will be careful not to give others "a piece of his mind," for that would be the worst of himself and would do himself injustice. In all these ways he will eliminate chief causes of strife and trouble.

The Christian is sincere with himself. He does not argue the cause of wrong until his conscience is silenced. He does not allow his feet to risk the slippery paths of speculation, nor does he play with

fire. He prays daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." He is far more strict with himself than with anyone else, and condones the lowering of standards by others far more readily than by himself.

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Liberality

The Kingdom of God is built on a liberal plan. It is God's will that His children, too, shall practice liberality. He takes care that those who carry out this divine principle shall not suffer for it, "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

God wants us to be liberal with our money. At least one tenth was the proportion suggested among His ancient people. His work to-day is not progressing as it would, were the people of God more liberal. Considering that God values a single soul more highly than all the treasures of the universe, this marks a serious defect. Christian liberality is essential for the progress of His kingdom.

God wants us to be liberal with our time. Every day He expects us to have a bit of conversation with Him; also every week one day, and every year one week. Considering the countless numbers of His people whom He thus invites, this requires infinite attention on God's part; but He is ever ready. God is liberal with time, because

eternity is His. But He also promises to us eternal life.

God wants us to be liberal with our talents. He first gave us these talents. We derive pleasure from their use; but God asks for a tithe on them, too. Our songs, our musical attainments, our Bible knowledge, our pedagogical preparation, our acquaintance with people and conditions, all these we should liberally lay at the Master's feet. In it all we are asked to give ourselves, for " The gift without the giver is bare."

Purity

The greatest sorrows that have visited humanity have come through defects in purity. Wherever there are sordid motives there is impurity; but let us now think of purity as it is usually understood in modern times, the pure relationships between the sexes. Impurity has cast a blast on every civilization and has ultimately wrought its ruin. But purity has invariably brought happiness and health.

Impurity expresses itself in modern times chiefly through divorce and smutty intimations. Purity finds expression in the Christian home, in Christian fellowship, in innocent recreation at suitable times, in serving God and man for the welfare of humanity and the glory of God. Purity is so essential in Christian work because the Christian religion as such knows neither Jew nor Greek, neither male

nor female (Gal. 3:28). There is no sex in the Christian religion. Therefore, Christian workers are constantly thrown together from both sexes and must work in intimate association. Women trust men who do Christian work. It is the depth of treachery to abuse this freedom and to betray such simple trust. Every thought of sex must be cast out by the Christian worker, while laboring with others in the kingdom of God. He, who finds himself unable to suppress the animal while serving at God's altar, must withdraw himself until the needed grace is given him; or find the needed strength direct from God. This does not mean, however, that unmarried Christian workers do wrong, while laboring together, to observe each other's virtues and to enter upon that stage usually known as love. They may love each other with perfect purity. And blessed are those Christian workers, who find their companions for life in this environment.

Love

But the greatest of these is love; because it is most abiding. Faith will be changed into sight, and hope will some day be realized. But love never needs to undergo a change, because its nature is eternal. By this is meant, of course, not primarily the love between a man and a maid, but rather the love whose origin and objective are spiritual. This love cannot be defined; because, as in the case of God, it has no limits; its source and

aim is God. But love finds expression in certain feelings and activities that help us to understand it.

Love casts out envy, jealousy and bitterness. It has no room for anything unlovely. Instead, it practices charity and benevolence. Love sees good where hatred sees nothing but evil. A story is related of a crowd standing about a dead dog on the wayside, of which every one in the crowd had something ugly to say. There seemed to be nothing good to be remarked about that despicable cur. But a young man on the edge of the crowd said, "What beautiful pearly teeth." That young man, according to the story, was Jesus. Whether this be true, we know that Jesus saw good in Nathaniel, called Simon a rock, and loved the rich, young ruler, who failed to follow Him.

To know what love is, read and read again I Corinthians 13. Read and read again the Gospel according to John. But even so, we cannot know what love is unless we have it in our own hearts.

"Love's on the high road,
Love's on the by-road,
Love's in the meadow, and love is in the mart,
And in every byway,
Wherever I go my way,
I see love asmiling, because love is in my heart."

These are the great Christian virtues, which, being lived by us, serve to incarnate in our lives the truth of God in a measure, as it was once incarnated in full through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

For this purpose are all the teachings of the Christian faith.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Bring out clearly and fully from the members their views of a virtuous life as compared with a dissolute life. Then discuss the second Parable of Luke Fifteenth. Do not fear to include also the first and the third Parable of that chapter.

2. Have the papers read on particular virtues and discuss them jointly.

3. Allow expression regarding the highest virtue; the most popular virtue; the most useful virtue.

4. Elicit opinion regarding the absence of certain virtues on the part of some, who nevertheless are strong in other virtues.

5. Discuss cases of religious workers who did successful Christian work, while secretly practicing vices. Look this straight in the face, and reach a solution; otherwise, do not touch it.

6. Find out how members account for people who do not confess Christ, but who lead moral lives.

7. Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher, maintained that when virtue became a pleasure, it could no longer be reckoned as a virtue. Does this appear true?

8. If religion without morality is monstrous, what about morality without religion?

9. Which virtue has been hardest to attain? Reasons.

For Further Research

The Seven Cardinal Virtues, James Stalker.

The Homely Virtues, Ian Maclaren (John Watson).

The Fact of Christ, Ch. VII, P. Carnegie Simpson.

Reading day by day: Rom. 12; Phil. 2:1-11; I Thess. 5:15-25; II Pt. 1:1-8; Heb. 11:1-6; Prov. 31:10-31; II Tim. 2:20-26.

XI

WORLD LEADERSHIP

THE Kingdom of God is being established on the plan of continuous increase. Eventually it must embrace the whole spiritual and physical universe. Nothing less than this was ever in the mind of God and nothing less will be accomplished. Christ saw this when, even facing the crucifixion, He exclaimed, "I have overcome the world." There is no room in this world for two governments. Whatever forces have arisen to set themselves against the gracious sovereignty of God, have been permitted to exert their evil energies only for a season. They are already doomed; for God would not be God if He did not prevail.

An Increasing Government

There came to our home in childhood an annual pamphlet that had on its fly-leaf the picture of a strong-built church, founded on a rock. The rock was surrounded by sea-billows that rolled and roared against it from every side. Underneath the picture was the text, "On this rock have I built My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Connecting picture

and text, the impression was strongly made, that, no matter what wicked powers might hurl themselves against the Church, she could never be overthrown. Which is most true. But the saying of Jesus means much more. Gates are for the purpose of keeping people out of the city, who are not wanted there. Gates of hell would equally be for the purpose of keeping out of that domain the forces of God. But those gates will not hold out against the Church, says Jesus. Which means that the forces of God will break through those gates that the forces of evil have set up, and will win for Christ what should always have been His.

This is no isolated teaching; it is the tenor of all the Scriptures. The stone which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, tumbling against the mighty image and grinding it to powder, did not remain on that spot, but spread and spread until it filled the earth (Dan. 2:35). The prophecy of Isaiah regarding the coming King (Isa. 9:6, 7), assures us that "of the increase of his government and of his peace there shall be no end." The promise of the Second Psalm is, "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Zechariah, speaking of that triumphal entry which the Messiah was one day to make into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:10; Lk. 19:38), assigns the King's dominion "from sea to sea and from the rivers even to the ends of the earth."

This is the teaching of Jesus. Because of love for the whole world He came, and to the whole world His message must be taken,—first to Jerusalem, then to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally to the uttermost part of the earth. It is the genius of the Kingdom of God to make Christ King in every heart and to make the ruling principles of heaven operative everywhere. This teaching is so clearly taught in The Lord's Prayer, and is so universally and thoroughly accepted, that we need not present it further in this study. We need consider, however, by what means this is to be brought about.

Victory Through Information

It has been previously remarked that Kingdom victories are through the Word, not through the sword. The spreading of good tidings is the first means of spreading the government of Christ. When Abraham was called away from his kin, to become a blessing to all the world (Gen. 12:3), God's confidence in him was founded on the teachings of his own household (Gen. 18:19). There is every evidence that God had planned to have His chosen people carry the good tidings from Palestine to the ends of the earth; but they failed to carry out His benevolent purposes. The story of Jonah illustrates the story of all Israel—a people unwilling to extend their blessings to the Gentiles.

Isaiah (ch. 11:1-9) portrays the workings of the principles of the Messiah; when strife and hurt have passed away, the wolf lying down beside the lamb, the cow and the bear feeding together, and the child, just weaned, playing safely with otherwise poisonous snakes, and all because, " The earth shall be full of the *knowledge* of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." In similar strain our Saviour tells us of the woman, who put her leaven in the loaves she was getting ready for baking. In each loaf the leaven started its work, touching the next cell and the next. There were explosions and expansions in each loaf, causing the loaves to grow longer and broader and higher, " until the whole was leavened." Thus, Jesus tells us, is the extensive work of the Kingdom of God. Each individual teaching another, it spreads. Scarcely had our Lord ascended for more than four months, when messengers told the Jewish Sanhedrin, " They are filling Jerusalem with their teaching." When Paul and Silas traveled in Europe, the opposition at Thessalonica cried out against them, " These men that are turning the world upside down have come hither also " (Acts 17:6). Which was precisely what they planned to do; for the world without Christ was standing on its head. They came to set it aright again. But their only weapon was the Gospel. They merely wanted people to know of Jesus and His love; the rest they were willing to leave to God.

Jesus, about to enter the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed, "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Later, when His work on earth had been accomplished, He gave the great commandment, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations." But the making of disciples always involves three steps,—first, to reach them; second, to teach them; and third, to train them. This is the program of Jesus; it is the program of the Kingdom of God.

The Program Jesus Inaugurated

Jesus began His ministry with preaching; which always means missionary or extension work. "Let us go into the next towns," He said (Mk. 1:38), "for therefore am I come." But soon He began to teach; that is, He gathered about Him a group which He first had reached, and instructed them more intimately in the way. This naturally led on to the third step; which is training. He sent the disciples out, two by two, telling them what to do and teach. They came back with reports, and He corrected their methods. When someone cast out devils in the name of Jesus, without joining their own group, and the disciples would denounce such an interloper (Lk. 9:49, 50), Jesus advised them to rejoice because another voice was proclaiming good tidings. When they would return evil for evil, to call down fire over a hateful village (Lk.

9:54), the Master showed them a better way. At last He could say, "It is expedient for you that I go away." There was still much to be learned; but they had caught the Master's principles and would be able by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to go on after He had left them bodily.

The Church has been most successful where it has carried out the program of Jesus. Paul was first of all a missionary. Like Jesus, he went from place to place, preaching, or reaching. But Paul also became a great teacher. Those people whom he had reached, stood in dire need of instruction. Many problems arose which they were unable to solve,—the relation of a Christian master to a Christian slave; the eating of meat, offered to idols; the worship of Christ as well as of God the Father; the reputed need of Jewish ceremony among Christians. Paul tried to answer their questions and wrote at least thirteen letters. These letters became the text-books of the churches. Paul was their teacher. He also trained young men to carry on the work without him. Timothy was one of the promising youths; whom he found and prepared for service. Titus was another; Silas a third. Presently, when the Apostle was confined to prison, the work went steadily on; for Paul had obeyed the principles of World Leadership; he had followed the program of Jesus.

For three hundred years the Church remained faithful to that great program. Then gradually

the teaching function diminished. Soon the preaching function went with it. Without preaching and teaching there could be little training. Boys were given some Latin to participate in the priests' rituals; some hymnody to sing; a little arithmetic to compute holidays; but the great principles of Christianity were kept from them. The Church entered upon its thousand years of darkness.

The great Reformation called the people back to the Word. It inaugurated an era of teaching; but not of preaching. The missionaries of that age and of three following centuries were Jesuits; not Protestants. But a Church that teaches without preaching is headed for Rationalism. This is exactly what occurred during the eighteenth century. At the close of that deadening era, the young men of the Church awakened to the meaning of Christ's last marching order. William Carey began the great movement, that has controlled the nineteenth century for Missions. But teaching did not improve during that same age. Pastors had handed their teaching functions over to laymen, whom they had not prepared. Homes, too, relegated Christian training to the Sunday school. But now, in the twentieth century, the threefold program of Jesus is once more before us,—to reach, or preach, to teach, and to train.

Extending the Kingdom's Realm

Preaching, Missions, and Evangelism are in the main but different names for the extension work of

the Church. In the local church the preaching service should be planned to win for Christ those who have not confessed His name. Where this is not planned there may be teaching; but there is no preaching. For preaching is in its nature the bringing of the first good tidings; while teaching is the more intimate explanation of the Kingdom principles. After Jesus had *preached* to the crowds, He *taught* His little group. But the plan of reaching or preaching should go beyond the local church both within State and nation, and even beyond its bounds. It should form part of the great plan of Missions in all the world.

1. Foreign Missions. Every Church is to-day recognizing its world-task. Men and women are going out to the ends of the earth to bring Christ there. Not all of them go to preach sermons; but all do go to reach. There is room for many medical men and nurses; for teachers and artisans; for farmers and consecrated business men and women. The field is open for Christians whose bodies are healthy, whose minds are normal, whose preparation has been efficient, and who are able to work congenially with others. This, we cannot help believing, is the greatest summons to our young people. In the homeland many applicants are pushing each other aside to gain a position. Yonder the fields are white and harvesters are all too few. The most certain way of making one's life count is in the Foreign Field.

2. National Missions. America in particular offers unbounded fields at home. The many millions of foreigners who have crowded our shores, stand greatly in need of Christian influences. They did not come here with the purpose of finding Christ; they frankly came to better their living conditions. But Christianity will serve more effectively than anything else to help them better their living conditions, both in this world and in that which is to come. The discontent that urged these people from their homelands is in itself a strong incentive for the acceptance of Christ's Gospel; if only they understand the messengers who bring that Gospel. Such people need and want friendship. The writer of these chapters happens to be one of them; so that he knows whereof he speaks. The foreigner can be reached heart to heart better than head to head. It requires no mental genius to get close to him; but it requires a Christlike soul. Those young people who are assured they can never go out to the Foreign Field, should make the work of Home Missions their next great concern. God sent us these many people; it is ours to bring Christ to them. If we fail in this, the consequences for evil, to them, to ourselves and to our children, are incalculable.

Thousands also of our own people, born and raised in America, are still ignorant of Christ's teachings. Descendants of the Scotch and Scotch-

Irish in the southern mountains are in desperate need of Christian leadership. Pioneers in the northern sections, where they are digging stumps and clearing land, are living with their children away from Gospel preaching and teaching. They need the Missionary. In the very heart of New Jersey, less than fifty miles from Philadelphia, a group of five thousand refugees from law and order are living in huts and hovels, with no Christian leader among them. The man or woman who really looks for tasks can find them among native Americans; who without the touch of some Christian life are tending toward the Christless grave.

3. Local church work. In every neighborhood where churches are established there are unreached people who may still be reached. The chief purpose of the local church is not to "Break the bread of life," to its own members, but rather to bring food to those starving souls. Each local church should be built on the extension plan; else it will die. Homes may be reached that have little children. Neither father nor mother is able or willing to attend the services of the church; but almost without exception, babies can be placed on the Cradle Roll. This simple act puts a link between church and home. The little child can be taught a blessing at the table; can be invited to an Easter Service to be on the platform for a moment with other babes; may be brought to the Beginners' Department of the Sunday school about the

time of her birthday, and will presently become a member of that department. Home Department and Cradle Roll should work hand and glove, that mothers as well as little children may be reached.

The Ladies' Aid Society, or whatever corresponds to it in a local church, offers another field for extension. Many of its members are not ready to unite with the church. But their attendance at the Ladies' Aid Society provides good contacts. There are classes in the Sunday school open for them. The Missionary Society should invite them. Special services at the church may attract them. Men's clubs are of similar import; so are all organized classes in the Sunday school. Their purpose should be *extension*. Annually, a survey or census ought to be made in the community to make certain that none are omitted whom the church may serve. Hospital patients are glad of attention. Jesus Himself suggests the needy and those in prison. Strangers that have just moved into the neighborhood should be invited. Open-air services are in place during the summer season.

Evangelistic services should form a part of each year's program in the local church. There may be times when outside evangelists are best able to bring conviction; for they can call attention to sins which local leaders would hesitate to mention. Boys and girls whom the church touches should be led both by the teachers of their classes and by their pastor to a public confession of Christ, and

must be taught the meaning of Church membership with all that it implies.

The Work of Instruction

Teaching follows reaching, or preaching. There are facts and principles which disciples should know; or they will find themselves seriously handicapped. The emphasis of great men in the Bible is on knowledge. Such knowledge, to be effective, must be of heart and will, as well as head; but knowledge there must be to make the full-fledged Christian. Among the things Christians must know, shall they lead others to Christ, the following stand out clearly:

1. Christians must know God as revealed in Jesus Christ. They should see God also in nature, in history, in biographies, and particularly in their own lives. They should meditate on the character of God and His attributes; on His relationships with men and His ways of dealing with them. They need to form daily, personal friendship with God, telling Him their plans and leaning on Him for strength. Themselves they must more and more consider God's helpers.

2. Christians must know the Word of God. The great principles of the Bible's teachings must be mastered, to form a system or philosophy of life by which to live. Great topics should be studied connectedly through the Bible, and certain books should be grasped so thoroughly that reasons for

its writing, effects of its messages, and applications for to-day are understood. The customs of Bible lands need to be known for backgrounds of Bible messages. Choicest expressions in the Bible ought to be memorized, because they gave vent to human souls yearning for God and seeing the hand of God about them.

3. Christians should know the Christian Church. Christ loved the Church supremely. He called Himself the Bridegroom, and His Church, the Bride (Jn. 3:29; Matt. 9:15). For the Church He gave His life. Through the Church He is doing His work to-day. His body ascended to heaven, but the Church is Christ's body on earth (I Cor. 12:14; Rom. 12:4), of which He is the Head. But we cannot love the Church, unless we know it. Our children are taught American history in the grammar grades, not because history is a grammar study; but because without knowing our country's history, they could not love our country. Almost no church member has even *read* the story of his church. This marks a deplorable lack. Beginning with the local church, each Christian should acquaint himself with the story of its origin, the people who started that local church, their troubles, sacrifices and successes. Then the story of one's denomination should be studied; for like every nation, so every denomination has a glorious story to tell its children. With this for a background, the General History of the great

Church of Christ should be mastered. Then shall God's children be at least able to love His Church.

4. Christians should know human nature. Jesus knew what was in man (Matt. 9:4; Jn. 2:24). We cannot readily convey God's truth of life unless we know the life into which it is to be brought. This means a study of psychology. It may not be necessary for every Christian leader to be an expert in psychology; but its great principles he should master,—the successive stages from birth to maturity; the workings of the nervous system; the meaning of instincts and habits, and the correlations of mental powers.

5. Christians should know ways of teaching. To know a *lesson* to be taught is not sufficient; because a *pupil* is to be taught. But to know the pupil is not quite sufficient either; for there are right or wrong ways of conveying the truth of God. If the child were a funnel through which information could be poured, it might be simple enough; but the pupil is alive. We need to master ways of approaching human souls. When Hamlet offered Rosenkrans a harp to play upon it, Rosenkrans confessed his ignorance; yet that same Rosenkrans attempted to play upon the soul of Hamlet. Pedagogy is essential for success in Christian teaching.

6. Christians should have some idea of Christion Ethics, Christian Sociology, and of Political Economy from a Christian point of view. For the

normal, active Christian will be drawn sooner or later into spheres of activity, where the name of Christ will be honored only in so far as a Christian leader arises, who sees things clearly with a Christian's eyes.

Christian Training

Training is the putting into practice, under direction, of the principles that have been taught. Without some phase of training, every principle remains a theory. To live out what has been mentally understood is to engage in training. Our Lord, therefore, sent out His disciples long before they were ready to labor independently. Their contacts with men saved them from mere theorizing and made them plunge headlong into practice. This principle of preparing leaders remains eternally true.

1. Training in extension work. The smallest child that is being taught of Christ, must at the same time be told to tell of Christ. Little children in our Sunday schools, whose parents attend no religious gatherings, must be instructed to climb on father's lap and to make him read the Lesson Story. Nothing will serve to reach that father-heart so well as his own child. "A little child shall lead them." This method needs to be followed all the way. Children through their Junior years may innocently propagate the Gospel in their immediate environs. Those more advanced should still

do so, although naturally they do it more consciously. It must be a rule of Christian teaching that every impression which results in no expression is failure. What we teach must be told and lived.

This applies equally to worship. The child that is taught to pray within the walls of a church-building, needs to be taught definitely how to extend worship beyond those walls. Too many of our charges believe that God may be worshiped on Sundays and in church; but at no other time or place. This must immediately be rectified. Blessings at the table, morning and evening prayers, Bible passages, great hymns and songs need to be taught them, that shall be their companions through the week. Not all of these should be memoriter. Children soon learn to compose their own prayers; under careful guidance.

Young disciples must be taught to invite others, and to go after delinquents. This may be so arranged that each week or each month certain of them have their turn. Their work must be followed up, and made to look as important to them as it really is; for in this way we are preparing world-leaders. Suitable praise must not be neglected; where helpful service has been rendered, or attempted.

2. Training to instruct. After the young people have pursued courses in Teacher Training and have successfully passed examinations in such

courses, they are not fully prepared to teach independently. Under skillful direction they must put into practice the theories they have acquired. First, they may sit with those who are ably instructing pupils of similar capacity with those whom they are presently to take. Then, they may themselves under direction enter upon the teaching of those for whom they are best fitted. But their training course is not yet over. They need to discuss sympathetically with other teachers the problems that arise, the failures that baffle them, and the successes that make them glad. This method of training never ceases. Avoidance of it is sufficient indication that usefulness has discontinued. Every Church School should appoint regular sessions at which the leaders consider with intimate frankness the real purpose of their work, the best means to attain to that purpose, the things that hinder, and the ways that have proved most helpful. Occasionally, tests should be given the pupils to ascertain the measure of their grasp on the subject. At all times, the effects of the instructions upon the pupils' actions should be observed, and in the teachers' hearts the hope must be kept alive that by and by these pupils will themselves have classes. One purpose of all leadership is that the leader shall become dispensable.

3. Training to lead others. It is the plan of God that the followers of Christ shall be the leaders of men. Our young people must be trained to

lead others in worship. This training may not be haphazard, by the rule of trial and error. The principles of devotional leadership are to be definitely taught; lest many suffer through poor ways of worship conduct. Programs for devotions need to be worked out with care, in which a central theme forms the basis of program building, around which song and prayer, Scripture and testimony are grouped in their order. This is no hasty procedure; it demands great effort and thought.

Christian young people must master the principles of persuasion, whereby those who are not distinctly Christian in their attitude may be brought to sympathetic views. In every community there are enterprises that will help or hurt according to those who control them. Even our choicest organizations are subject to human touch for good or ill. A group of Boy Scouts, for instance, may be trained into fidelity to God, church, and country; or may be swung away from sacred influences, to break the Sabbath, to indulge in selfish pleasures at the expense of others, and to mock at Christian manhood. The leader is the key to the whole situation. It is the church's task to train and furnish right leaders.

Municipal, state, and national government is safest in the hands of Christian leaders. We must train our young people for those imposing tasks. Almost without a single break the supreme government of our country has from the beginning been

in the hands of strong Christian men. Our Presidents have publicly acknowledged the sovereignty of God and have not hesitated to direct the hearts of our people toward divine worship. They have openly advocated the principles of Jesus Christ both for public measures and for private life. It is a happy omen that these great men have put into practice the principle which we enunciated, that the followers of Christ shall be the leaders of men. This omen is the happier, because our Presidents were elected to their high office by a people who were convinced of their integrity. No party dares to put forward a candidate for that position, upon whose character there rests the slightest blot. The American people are thus silently expressing their avowal of Christian leadership.

This is not equally true as yet in state and municipality. Bosses still rule in these lower places, and politics is still much besmudged. There is a crying need for Christian leaders to enter the political arena and to bring into every place of authority the principles of our Lord. This tremendous duty, from which no normal Christian has a right to shirk, must be inculcated in the minds of the young so that a coming generation shall be ready to perpetuate a government with the principles of Christ.

The Rules of Leadership

The rules that govern leadership are not mysterious; they may be acquired by every Christian.

1. A leader must understand the conditions among which he finds himself; the causes that have brought about these conditions; the factors that are still in operation to continue the same conditions; the weak points that render these same causes ready subjects of attack, and the elements that may be united either to strengthen the good, or to overcome the evil.

2. A leader must map out a program of action in such a form that he is able to see through it, and is able also to make others see through it. The program should be sufficiently practical to gain the good-will and to arouse the courage of others.

3. A leader needs to persuade others of the plans he has in mind, without imposing on them. He must be willing to stand corrected where someone detects a loophole, and to amend where another presents a helpful suggestion. The impression must be made that the program is not purely his own; but is that of all his fellows.

4. A leader must secure the active and sympathetic cooperation of his associates. He cannot work alone. Not far ahead of his group, but shoulder to shoulder with them he must go forward.

5. A leader must give and take suggestions, encourage and receive encouragement, withstand the

shocks of treachery and keep on hoping; because his goal is worthy.

When and Where This Training?

Christian training enjoys its greatest impetus in the Christian home. The great leaders of men on behalf of the government of Christ are the products of Christian homes. Moses received his choicest training there, and so did Samuel. By leading the child each day into his common field of service, but ever with the consciousness that God is interested, the mind is being prepared for world leadership. At first the home is all alone in this; but presently the many homes that form the church are joined to continue the educational task. Then, too, the daily work must be observed; for Sunday time does not suffice. There must be Christian education seven days a week, shall we train capable leaders. The Sunday is preparatory for every-day instruction. And at least one definite hour of supervised instruction must be added each week, to raise the daily standard. Week-day religious instruction has come to stay. Each local church needs to plan her program of education with week-day work included.

The Christian college, too, must take its leading share in our leadership program. Supported by Christian funds, conducted by Christian men and women, we could scarcely expect anything else. Our young people as they pass through our Chris-

tian colleges must be trained to go on into life's activities, not feebler, but stronger workers in the local church. To this end the curriculum must be adjusted and the Faculty selected. This is the greatest reason for the existence of the Christian college.

Students in universities and other independent schools must have the fellowship and guidance of strong Christian men and women, who shall lead them into avenues of Christian service. Not seldom leadership is found most richly among that student body. The call of their Great Leader must be transmitted to their hearts, so that they shall give themselves to full-time service, or in any event acknowledge the Christ as the Lord of their life.

The Aim is Being Achieved

The task which World leadership presents is tremendous; but it is God's plan, which means that ultimately it must come to pass. We know that under His leadership we go on to victory. Nor are we living in hope merely; our faith is changing to sight. Our churches are awakening to every-day instruction; our colleges are heeding the call for Christian training; our universities are sending out leaders into all the world. The world's leadership is within our grasp, for Christ our Supreme Leader. It is ours to follow on.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Review briefly the three preceding chapters, and use these for an introduction to this lesson.

2. Give a bird's-eye view of the progress of Christianity from the Acts of the Apostles to our own day.

3. Observe together the means which God has employed in the spread of His Kingdom, including agents who did not willingly serve Him.

4. Have various members enumerate those principles that should be known throughout the world, with suggestions how these teachings may best be promulgated.

5. Offer opportunity to every one to testify to the way in which he or she has actually extended the knowledge of Christ.

6. Map out a general outline of curriculum in which the outstanding teachings of the Bible find a place.

7. Consider ways and means in your own vicinity by which the best plans may be most likely carried out, including the time and finance elements.

8. Find out what secular training has done for the personal preparation of those present, compared to their religious training.

9. Assign to each member at least three Bible passages to be memorized, in which the world-leadership of God's people is portrayed.

For Further Research

God's Missionary Plan for the World, Ch. III, IV, VI, J. W. Bashford.

The Unfinished Task, Ch. I, II, X, James L. Barton.

Leadership, Chas. H. Brent.

Educational Evangelism, Chas. E. McKinley.

Jesus the Master Teacher, H. H. Horne.

Reading day by day: Gen. 12:1-3 and 18:17-19; Ps. 67; Isa. 11:1-9; Dan. 2:31-44; Rom. 10:13-19; Acts 1:1-8; Rev. 7:9-17.

XII

LIFE EVERLASTING

FEW are the influences brought to bear upon human thought and conduct that so seriously effect man as those that make him form his views of the hereafter. The man who labors under the impression that death ends all, will of necessity regard the affairs of this visible world of paramount importance. He will attempt to make the most of everything material and will not reckon with memories that may some day haunt him, or yield himself to prospects of joys that may await him. The note that burst from the troubled soul of Robert Burns, when he looked on the poor but happy birds,

> *"Yet thou art blest compared with me,*
> *The present only touches thee."*

does not spring from his lips. For the present only touches him. But the man who believes that this life on earth is but a schooling for the larger life to come, will diligently set himself at the course of preparation. His mind is one with that of the poet Bryant,

" So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams."

We are in this chapter considering a great issue. Yet, many look for some tangible evidence of a life hereafter and ask, " How can we be assured? "

If evidence of the bodily senses is demanded by way of assurance, then we shall search in vain. Spiritism with its mediums and its tappings will never bring us light; for these are not the forces of light. No matter how deeply even men of science may grow interested in seances and rappings, the children of God are not to be deceived. We know better. We know that no human being has the power to control the souls of the redeemed in glory and to summon them at pleasure back to this mundane world. That power is God's alone. If there are any spirits over whom those mediums can exert control, they are the spirits of darkness, which can never be trusted. Christian people must find their grounds of trust elsewhere. Happily, they are to be found elsewhere.

The Grounds for Our Belief in Immortality

It would be presumptuous for anyone to undertake the summing up of reasons that may be found

in the hearts of others for their faith in the future life. For each of us has enjoyed his own experience in the way of sufferings and deliverances, disappointments and hopes, fellowships and partings, promises and their fulfillments. But the reasons that will be suggested have probably made themselves felt in some form on the part of those who have earnestly thought on these things.

1. The indestructibility of matter. It is generally maintained by scientists that matter cannot be destroyed by natural forces. It does constantly change in appearances; there is an interchange of combinations among its elements; but essentially it abides. The human body after death returns to dust; but that same dust may again serve in the composition of another body. It is at least dust.

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

This is in full agreement with the Christian teaching that matter did not come into existence by natural forces alone. It is also in line with our teaching of immortality. For if natural forces cannot annihilate the body, how shall they suffice to annihilate the soul, which controls the body! This mind that has been thinking far into the future, can we believe that it has wholly ceased to be while the body is returning to its former elements?

2. The inequalities of human life on earth. Our social life, in its lack of full justice to many, its

misunderstandings that are never cleared up, its undeserved sufferings, and its unearned pleasures, suggests a final reckoning and adjustment. Jesus puts the story of Dives and Lazarus in no uncertain terms. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Lk. 16:25). Certainly, if this life were all, Justice could not have its perfect way.

3. Unreached ideals. We are fathering within us ideals which with all our hearts we long to reach; but during this brief lifetime we do not reach them. Paul's pressing toward the mark (Phil. 3:14), was not peculiar to him. Every Christian is inspired by unattained aspirations. These aspirations are not altogether contingent on material things; they are spiritual in their nature. The destruction of the body, therefore, should nowise interfere with the realization of these high ideals. There is need of further conscious striving for the reaching of the goal; for it touches the innermost self. Eternal life is the requisite of a human soul.

4. Closely akin to this ideal urge is our daily fellowship with Christ on earth. He, who has tasted His comradeship, cannot be convinced that such friendship will be ruthlessy broken off. To begin this fellowship without a chance for its perpetuation would be nothing less than cruel. Rather are we looking for an ever increasingly intimate rela-

tionship with Christ and with all that pertains to the spiritual world.

5. What is so true of our comradeship with Christ is in a measure true of our friendship with others. Not one of us, not even the atheist, is ready to accept at full value the idea that the grave ends human existence; when this involves the utter breaking of our friendship ties. There is established within every human heart a definite hope that somehow, somewhere, we shall meet again with those whom we have loved and lost. To declare this hope a delusion is inhuman.

6. The promise of Christ is ours that He has gone to prepare a place for us, and that He will come again to receive us unto Himself (Jn. 14:2,3).

7. Christ's rising from the dead is our full assurance of rising again with Him. Other reasons are strong, but this is for those who have accepted Him the surest guarantee. The fact of His resurrection stands unchallenged in history; though regarding the form and nature of it there may be differences of opinion. Jesus lives; we shall live also. Not simply as the Son of God did Jesus Christ break the bonds of death on that great Easter Morning; but also as the Son of man, our representative, "The first-born among many brethren" Rom. 8:29).

The Nature of Our Immortality

Our subject lends itself to endless speculations, so that many people to whom theorizing seems

much more alluring than practicing, have yielded to the temptation of spinning out opinions that have little substance. In the main, however, these diversified opinions may be grouped under two heads,—those favoring the idea of death as a sleep from which there will be an awakening, and those persuaded that death involves no break in our conscious existence.

The former group may gather up much evidence from the Old Testament, where death is mentioned rather customarily as "falling asleep." But those who wrote the older Scripture did habitually employ figures of speech, which may not in all fairness be taken literally. To this should be added that previous to the coming of Christ the Scripture teachings of a future life are anything but clear compared to the inspiring notes of the New Testament, which leave no doubt to the student who is willing to accept new truth. The Bible teaches, regarding the future life:

1. Conscious existence. Moses, of whom the record witnesses that he was dead and buried, conversed with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. So did Elijah, whose departure from this earth occurred in a peculiar way. The voice of God from the burning bush mentions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Our Lord Himself calls attention to this instance to show that these patriarchs are alive. His parable of Dives and Lazarus pictures Abraham in heaven with Lazarus nearby, and able to

converse with Dives. Although this is simply a parable, Jesus is never guilty of picturing the impossible. Again, we have His promise, "Where I am there ye shall be also."

2. Immediate entrance into the heavenly realm. The Roman church holds to a belief in Purgatory, where human souls should first be purified before they may enter the abode of the blessed. There is something in this teaching that naturally appeals to us; for we know ourselves so imperfect. But there is no such teaching in the Bible. Instead, there is the assurance of purification in Jesus Christ, which renders Rome's Purgatory superfluous. There are also the words of Jesus to the victim on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Stephen, the Martyr (Acts 7:59), commended his spirit to Jesus at the moment of his death; just as Jesus had commended His own soul to God.

3. Full enjoyment of holiness. Freed from the body with its nervous system, in which sin has brought its impressions of evil, and away from the sights that dazzled or tempted, our aims will be pure, our interests will be centered in God, we shall be "whole" or holy. This holiness will include our whole selves, it will be complete; but through the aeons of eternity it will grow ever deeper.

4. Social enjoyment. Life everlasting means, first, our meeting with Christ Whom we love more than life. It also means meeting our loved ones

and friends, who have helped us on the upward way. There will be those, too, whom we have influenced toward Christ. We shall enjoy the goodly fellowship of them all. And our universal theme will be, "The grace of God in Christ Jesus."

5. Continuous service. On earth we often sense weakness of body, exhaustion of mind, discouragement of soul, and lack of time. But in heaven these hindrances will not be felt. We shall be able to serve God night and day (Rev. 7:15). Just as daughters help mother at home, and sons work with father on the farm, so shall the great household of God serve Him together. A new heaven and a new earth will be our home, in which righteousness dwelleth (II Pt. 3:13). There His servants shall truly serve Him (Rev. 22:3). If song and prayer shall form part of that service, the beautifying of the earth, too, may provide further employment, as it did when man had not yet sinned.

6. God as the center of life and thought, and the goal of the soul's ideals. Not the meeting again with loved ones, but the coming face to face with Christ is the supreme fact of immortality. We shall be forever with the Lord. The infinite attributes of God we shall contemplate and adore. His ways with us, so gracious; His works, so majestic and wise; His plans so abundant in depth, and width and length; His inherent tenderness and power; His absolute holiness, these phases of God's Being we shall contemplate through the eternities.

7. Gradual growth in wisdom and love. When hope has been realized and faith has changed to sight, then love will still endure and evermore increase. There is no standing still for immortal souls. The presence of God, the liberty from sin, the fellowship of the saints, these will have their part in the augmenting of our love. At the same time these experiences will serve to strengthen our wisdom and to increase our knowledge. Thus shall we grow in the likeness of our Redeemer, " For we shall see Him as He is."

The Last Judgment

Not merely here and there, but consistently throughout the Bible we come across assurances that some day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10; Acts 24:25; Heb. 9:27; Jn. 5:22, 9:39, 18:8; Eccl. 11:9, 12:14). Then shall the things we have thought, said, and done on earth stand out before our memories with perfect clearness, as if written on the pages of a record-book, and of these experiences account must be rendered (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12).

Naturally this teaching does not strongly appeal to those who have accumulated heavy debts and are not willing to cast their burden on Jesus. They do not want any judgment to come; accordingly they try to persuade themselves that all such teaching is foolish babble. But their denial of a judgment does not in the least alter the fact of a judgment.

The witness of the Bible suffices for us who believe it to be God's Word. But even aside from the Bible, the deepest thinker of modern days, Immanuel Kant, came through a most searching process of reasoning to the conclusion that there ought to be a final judgment. And do not our own hearts testify to the fairness of it? Christ put great emphasis on this teaching (Matt. 3:12, 8:12, 25:41; Mk. 9:44-46). Beyond all these we suggest these reasons for believing in a final judgment.

1. Within ourselves we find a voice of approval or disapproval of our ways. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things" (I Jn. 3:21).

2. Misunderstandings and false accusations in this life ought to be cleared. Because of prevailing ignorance and sin they could not be perfectly cleared here on earth. None but God, Who knows the end from the beginning and before Whom our thoughts are exposed, is able to pronounce a righteous judgment.

3. Untold abuse and misdemeanor has been and is still being committed on earth without due punishment upon the perpetrator; who is likely to gloat over his wicked triumphs. On the other hand there are so many noble deeds that have remained hid from human eyes without the slightest recognition. In fact, the noblest deeds are those that never come before the public. The loyal spirit that motivated these great deeds ought to be recognized some day.

4. The whole trend of our own lives, the events of history, and the teachings of the Bible, culminating in the words of Christ, bear witness to a final judgment. There would be something inexplicable lacking if no such judgment were to be expected.

Eternal Punishment

In view of the love which parents bear toward their children, the thought of eternal punishment is likely to awaken a feeling of revulsion. "What father," some are sure to remark, "would be so hard-hearted as to condemn his own children to never-ending punishment?" Such a natural feeling should not be lightly set aside. There can be no question but that the infinite Father is far more merciful than are His finite children. It were foolish for us to attempt pronunciations on so truly awful a subject. Nevertheless, it is ours to consider the facts as they are before us.

1. Every sin, whether committed by God's children or by out-and-out sinners, carries within itself eternal punishment. Even when God forgives that sin, its punishment is not thereby set aside. This punishment makes itself felt in two ways. First, the soul that sins suffers deterioration. Instead of growing in grace, as a good Father intended, sin results in a soul's going backward in grace. The soul that sins does not gain capacity; it loses capacity. This deterioration will tell on the soul through all the eternities. Some will at last be

saved, so as by fire. Their works cannot follow with them; but are burned away like hay and stubble. They themselves will be less capable of enjoying the glories of heaven and gaining a knowledge of God than if they had not committed those sins. Second, in this life, also, sin finds us out. It effects the body; it hurts the mind; it thwarts our relationships. David found forgiveness with God for the terrible crimes he had committed. His heart was perfectly cleansed. But this did not deter the messenger of divine mercy from saying in the name of God, " The sword shall not depart from thine house " (II Sam. 12:10, 13, 14). From that day forward the sorrows of David began within his own family. But if this be true of the child of God, how much more of the sinner who seeks no forgiveness! Daily he disqualifies himself more certainly for heaven.

2. There is a general misunderstanding regarding the sinner's relationship to God. Jesus makes it very clear that those who will not accept Him as their Saviour may not safely consider themselves God's children (Jn. 8:41-44). The cause of this losing of the claims of childhood lies not with God but with the sinner. He denies the fatherhood of God by his sinful ways. He seeks no divine friendship. He breaks whatever threads might still feebly hold him to God. To deny divine childhood by his actions and then to claim it with his lips is contradictory.

3. There is an all-sufficient Saviour from sin, who will bring back into childhood those who let Him, and through whom the punishment from sin in future life may be averted. Whoever here on earth rejects this gracious offer, shuts himself away from the mercies of God; he tramples under foot the precious blood of Christ (Heb. 10:29). As for those who have never heard the Gospel, there are among them such as have persistently sought if haply they might find Him (Acts 17:27). It seems impossible to think of these as lost. It appears both from the Scriptures (Acts 10:35), and from the information we may gather from daily life, that God's Spirit knocks at every human heart; so that none who fail to feel after Him are wholly free from the sin of negligence (Rom. 1:21).

4. The time of probation is here and now. "To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your heart" (Heb. 3:15). There is not found in all the Scriptures one single encouragement for belief in saving repentance in the future life. "Where the tree falls there it shall lie" (Eccl. 11:3). The person who sins does not sin from compulsion, as many modern psychologists and criminal lawyers would have it; he sins from his own free choice. They, who sin, do consciously reject the good and accept the evil. Hard as it may sound, it is as true as the Word of God that they are deserving of punishment. In this condemnation we all are included;

but through Christ we may escape. This is the first meaning of salvation in Christ.

5. There is another side. "The just shall live by faith." Those who have accepted Christ shall stand at His right hand, as clear from punishment as if they had never sinned. Instead of punishment they shall receive reward. That reward will not be eternal life; for Christ has earned that for them; it is given them as an act of grace. Their reward shall be eternal joy for having served. Souls brought to Christ through them will be the fruits of their labor. Lives to which on earth they ministered in some form, will be surrounding them. That for which they never received payment will be their glory; while that for which they were once paid will sink into insignificance. They laid up treasures in heaven. "Well done, good and faithful servants," will sound to their ears as the choicest of music. The ideals on which they started on earth will be continued toward perfection. The fellowship of Christ and of all the saints,—all these will be their reward.

Reunion of Soul and Body

To be a human being means to be soul and body, and not simply soul alone. The redeemed who now rejoice before the throne of God are souls, and not human beings in our sense of the word. Their joy will not be perfect until soul and body once more form a union (I Cor. 15:54). For this reason the

work of Christ was not complete when He had conquered Satan; He must conquer death. He arose from the grave. To the disciples He appeared for forty days in His divine-human personality; which showed the wondering brethren a spiritualized body. It was not the same body which Joseph and Nicodemus had laid away in the tomb, although that tomb had been emptied. As the stalk of wheat differs from the grain of wheat that was buried in the earth, so did that glorified body differ from the body that had suffered on the Cross (I Cor. 15:37, 38). Lest we lose ourselves in a labyrinth of fancies and speculations, let us again abide by the facts.

1. As Jesus Christ arose from the dead, not only as a living soul, but as a complete human being, soul and body, so shall we arise from the dead (I Cor. 15:20).

2. As Jesus Christ arose in a spiritualized body, so shall we be clothed again in a spiritualized body. There is no need, therefore, of fear regarding the assimilation of the fleshen body by animals; for that body is at death forever laid aside. It may return to dust; it may be petrified; it may be devoured by worms or beasts. We do not need it any more. It should be observed, at the same time, that Jesus showed His disciples His hands and His feet, with the prints of the nails. The new, spiritualized body will bear resemblance to the old

body, in so far as such resemblance will enhance the glory of eternal life.

3. The new body shall be our perfect medium for service and spiritual fellowship. Body and soul shall be perfect helpers to each other (Rev. 7:14-17).

Heaven and Hell

Where Christ is there is heaven. To be in the conscious and immediate presence of Christ is to be in heaven. It is obvious, then, that heaven begins on earth. Here in this life we may sit with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). Enoch, Abraham, and Moses enjoyed that fellowship. Since the Son of God became man the privilege is much more general. "Lo, I am with you alway."

Where Christ is not there is hell. This is true here on earth. Hell starts here, too. To live without God and without hope is the essence of hell. To follow the desires of the body, while in this body there dwells the likeness of God, this, too, is hell.

In the final abode of the lost, the absence of God and all that is good, shall be eternal death. Even the general graces which are now poured out upon a world which God made and which He loves, shall there be lacking. The presence of God's children, on account of whom sin always has been restrained, will then also be missing. Evil shall then hold its complete and terrible sway over its victims with nothing to ameliorate its hurtful influence. Like a

great breath of fire it shall eat into the souls of the lost. Memories will call back evils committed, without repentance. Those who once heard the good tidings of peace, but took no heed, will rue their neglect; but will find no place for repentance. The story of Esau and of Judas affords us an inkling of what hell shall forever mean.

In heaven the loftiest conditions of this life shall find perfection. The complete absence of sin and the never-ceasing presence of Christ, enjoyed by the whole family of the redeemed, will introduce us to a state of perfect bliss. We shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, ever growing in the friendship and the likeness of our Lord.

Suggestions for Discussion

1. Ask for the assigned memory passages and discuss them. Ask for first lines of hymns that present similar teachings.

2. Allow members who were present at seances, or who have immediate intelligence regarding them, to give their views and experiences. Be ready for someone who will pop up with the story of Saul, the witch of Endor and the appearance of Samuel. You will understand, of course, that there is nothing in that narrative which you are obliged to defend or refute.

3. If anyone indulges in telepathic experiments, allow presentation of that; but limit time beforehand for all these.

4. There are remarkable deathbed scenes; let them be discussed.

5. Make clear that the unseen world is by its nature not visible or tangible.

6. Let members mention ideals they have not

reached, but which may be more perfectly reached hereafter.

7. Consider the effects our views of the hereafter must inevitably have on this life. Trace these to actual incidents.

8. Discuss rewards and punishments in their many phases. Some will hold that every sin brings sufficient punishment on earth. Make sure that God receives consideration.

9. Close with a consideration of Christ among us now, as Friend and daily Companion.

For Further Research

The Assurance of Immortality, Ch. III, H. E. Fosdick.

The Christian Hope, Ch. XI, XII, XIII, William Adams Brown.

Personality, the Christian Ideal, Ch. XVIII, John Wright Buckham.

The Christian's God, Part IV, Section I, IV, William Burton.

Reading day by day: Rom. 8:10-14; Jn. 14:1-6; I Jn. 2:24-29; I Jn. 5:11-20; Rev. 21:22; I Cor. 15:35-49.

In case a thirteenth class-period is required, this will naturally be devoted to a written test on these lessons, or to a verbal preparation for such a test.

Printed in the United States of America

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